THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND

BY

BROUGHAM VILLIERS

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BY

BROUGHAM VILLIERS

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"THE OPPORTUNITY OF LIBERALISM"

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LONDON
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PREFACE

It is the purpose of this book to make clear what the Labour-Socialist Party is, and to suggest its probable influence on the near, as well as the more distant, future. The successes of the party have caused widespread alarm, especially among Conservatives, who do not appear to know whether it is Socialist or not. Socialism is certainly the conscious aim of the majority of its leaders, and probably of most of the rank and file; and the party, at two Conferences, has already asserted that Socialism is its ultimate object. But there is no desire to compel every member to accept Socialism; it is sufficient if the affiliated Unions are in favour of acting in the interests of Labour, independently of either of the other parties. Hence such apparently contradictory votes as those at the Hull Conference, where the delegates voted one day against imposing Socialism as a test of loyalty, and the next in favour of Socialism in the abstract. I hope I have made clear how far Socialism and Labourism are one.

The appearance of the new party was perfectly natural, nay, inevitable, sooner or later. Under

surface differences, complex enough, indeed, the English people are no more insensible than others to universal appeals; and the appeal of Socialism, put in its simplest form, is universal. Owing to special causes, and for the lifetime of one generation, Socialism made no apparent progress in this country; but from the days of John Ball to those of Owen, there is enough in our history to show that this is not due to any special anti-Socialist bias in the English character. It was enough, however, to convince politicians who disliked Socialism, and were not averse to flatter themselves on our superiority to continental errors, that Socialism was "un-English." The history of the last two years has shattered that illusion. For the future, practical politicians must allow for the influence of a Socialist-Labour Party in Parliament and the constituencies.

I have endeavoured to explain the late arrival of an organised Socialist party in British politics. Though the central idea of Socialism is simple and universal, the methods of its appeal are determined by complex circumstances of time and place. The moment the poor really understand what the Socialist is aiming at, they are convinced —"the common people hear him gladly." But Socialism must speak to the people in the language they understand, in a way that reveals its relation to the things of their daily life. Broadly speaking, the history of the Labour Party is the record of the evolution of an instrument capable of doing this for the English. The idea is universal, the

method national. Like all products of evolution, the party has been shaped as much by the pressure of its national environment as by its inner spirit. Hence it is just as possible for the *doctrinaire* Socialist to find fault with its programmes and methods as it is for anyone to criticise the defects of any organ of the body, fitted roughly by evolution to the work it has to perform. But this is the spirit of Browning's Caliban—

> "while his hand was in,
> Why not make horny eyes no thorn could prick,
> Or plate my scalp with bone against the snow?"

The qualities of the Labour Party have been acquired by experience; its limitations can only be overcome in the same way.

I have endeavoured to defend the central aim of Socialism, a society founded upon brotherhood and co-operation, while advocating the utmost freedom in methods. This is to work for the perfection of society by the method of nature. As the pebbles of the brook are worn by the action of the water, not into one uniform shape, but into a common smoothness, so the stream of social tendency works through the ages, rounding off the egoisms of men and nations into fitness for the life of fellowship. But social evolution in no way tends to uniformity — nay, its progress involves an ever more picturesque variety. Nature has no theory, no "philosophy of the State" to teach men. Slowly she impresses upon them the fact that co-operation is less wasteful than competition; and, sooner or later, however painful the

process, men must learn her lesson. Nation after nation has risen to greatness, grown wealthy, and allowed its wealth to surfeit the few, while the many were left hungry. They have failed to realise that, as the blood flows freely to all the active members of the body, so, in a healthy society, should the fruits of the earth return to those who won them. Again and again, nature has turned to the Gentiles, the honoured civilisation has been destroyed, and the long task has been recommenced with a new race of barbarians. The political ideas accepted and admired in one age are generally such dreary reading in the next, because they ignore the fact that no theory of property, however logical, has the sanction of nature, unless, under it, the people get properly fed, clothed, and educated. Nature is not moral, but practical; she cares little whether you "rob the rich" so long as you feed the poor. She presents to societies, not a doctrine of the schools, but a crude alternative—fellowship or death. Fortunately, the new Labour Party is not hampered with many doctrines. It has come to persuade our people to choose the first alternative—fellowship.

The central chapters, dealing with the evolution of the Labour Party and Socialism, give indeed a glance at the history of the movement, but only in order to explain the present-day party itself. They are political criticism, rather than history, a criticism written in the light of the above conception of Socialism. The time has not arrived to write a formal history of the party, and only

widely known facts are here recorded. But without some knowledge of its past, we cannot gauge the party's present strength, nor its possibilities of growth. So far, then, and so far only, as it appeared necessary to be historical in order to do this, I have dealt with the history of the movement.

It is a Labour Party that is wanted at the moment, for it is Labour questions, in the narrower sense, that constitute the essential social politics of the day. Only on matters concerning the physical well-being of the people do the forces of social evolution speak to us in the imperative mood; as to what superstructure they shall build upon our foundation when we have fed the people, coming generations may have a good deal of freedom of choice. Yet so great a change as the acceptance of the basic principle of Socialism implies must necessarily have far-reaching effects on every aspect of life. These, however, it is only possible to foreshadow; and each reader may prefer to make his own forecast of the future. I have, however, in the concluding section of the book, tried to suggest some probable lines of future development. Such questions as that of the position of women, the drink problem, of freedom, of machinery, are all seen in a new light from the point of view of Socialism. But prophecy is dangerous, and I have not attempted to elaborate any general scheme of future society. The chapters in the third part may be read as scattered essays in various aspects of Socialism, immediate or more

remote. It is the people, not present-day Socialists, who will make the Socialism of the future. In the writing of Utopias, the personal equation is everywhere present; we learn how the author would have the people use their heritage, not what the people will actually do with it. Hence, these chapters are suggestions merely, though not made without some study of what seem to me the abiding laws of social science, and the character of the English people.

BROUGHAM VILLIERS.

January 29, 1908.

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PART I

THE ORIGIN AND CAUSES OF THE MOVEMENT

THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

THE PURPOSE OF SOCIALISM

In any society, ancient or modern, we may note a conflict between two antagonistic principles, that of co-operation and that of competition. In the world beneath society, among the animals themselves, a like antagonism exists. As the Darwinian naturalist looks upon the world, nature seems to him a vast battlefield, on which proceeds an endless struggle for survival between competing types and individuals. Looking closer, however, we perceive that this is only half the story. Among the plants and lower-grade animals, indeed, competition goes on without restraint; and the only method by which advance is made is that of the ruthless destruction of those who, through weakness or any other cause, are unable to sustain their part in the battle. Among these, progress is slow; some of the lower organisms of to-day being virtually the same as their direct ancestors many millions of years ago. Among these organisms, the

command of nature, "Eat each other," seems as imperative as it is cruel. Vast numbers of individuals are born to each species every year, only a minute proportion of whom can live to reproduce their kind. The waste of life is enormous. An oak will bear, in a single summer, acorns sufficient to sow a forest; during its lifetime, it may produce seed enough to stock a nation with oaks. Yet the forests to-day contain no more oaks than those of thousands of years ago. A cod spawns millions of eggs, yet the sea is not overstocked. Among the lower intelligences not one germ in a million succeeds in fulfilling the purpose of its being. A waste, unthinkable in extent, goes on continually, producing only in the course of ages any perceptible improvement in life.

Nevertheless, as the struggle proceeds, it becomes apparent that all is not waste. Early on, some organisms tend to take root, to find their safety in attachment to some particular place; others acquire or develop the power of motion, and we see the first division of the vegetable and animal kingdoms. Under favourable conditions, types tend to become more highly organised; and, in time, we see the development of sex, a thing matterless, except for variety and beauty, in vegetable life, but the source of moral evolution where there is the power of motion. Among organisms having this power, intelligence is a factor making for success, and the evolution of the animal kingdom becomes a record of increasing intelligence. Consciousness and the love of life become also valuable, and, being so, tend to develop.

The higher the animal, then, the keener its intelligence, its sensitiveness to pain or pleasure, its conscious hold on life.

With the appearance of sex in the animal world we note the first beginnings of a new method in nature. The sexes are interdependent; both, where sex exists, are essential to race preservation. Again, in plants, where there is no power of action, this is only of æsthetic consequence; in animals, it is the beginning of conscious association. The sex attraction draws the lower animals together, though at first there is no care for their offspring on the part of either parent. The young are produced in myriads, for in the desperate battle of life, launched weak and uncared for upon the world, only so can a residue survive to prolong the life of the race. Later, we get the maternal instinct appearing. The mother becomes, for a time at least, the protectress of her young, a work in which she is later assisted by the male. The enormous value of this development as a factor in race preservation becomes apparent almost at once. The waste of life becomes vastly reduced, and animals that care for their young need to produce incomparably fewer than those who leave them to shift for themselves.

"There is safety in numbers." Even fishes, where the parental love is yet unknown, tend to travel in shoals, probably for mutual protection against other fishes not too conspicuously superior to themselves in size. With the higher graminivorous animals, whose life is one of defence, not aggression, this tendency, except where food is very scarce, becomes more marked.

The gregarious instinct grows, like those of sex and motherhood, because of its value in race preservation. Already, in the animal world, we have the beginnings of society. In some species, bees for instance, we have more than the beginnings—we have creatures perfectly socialised in so far as the limitations of their lives demand it.

We are now in a position to understand the truth and error of an oft-quoted saying of the late Professor Huxley's:—

> The first men who substituted the state of mutual peace for that of mutual war, whatever the motive which impelled them to that step, created society. But in establishing peace they obviously put a limit on the struggle for existence. Between the members of that society, at any rate, it was not to be pursued *à outrance*. And of all successive shapes which society has taken, *that most nearly approaches perfection in which war of individual against individual is most strictly limited.*

The italics are mine. If that society approaches nearest to perfection in which "war of individual against individual" is most limited, then social perfection means the total abolition of that war. In a perfect society the antagonism between the pre-social principle of competition and the social one of co-operation would have ceased, owing to the complete and universal victory of the latter. "Jerusalem is a city that is at unity with itself," and it is evident that, in the perfect state, there would be no antagonisms at all. With the trifling exception of the annual massacre of the drones, bees have already reached this state, and so, possibly, may man. But the socialisation of man, which means the

establishment of a complete harmony between the instincts of the individual and the good of society, is a much more complex thing, as the nature of men is more complex than that of bees.

It is a fair criticism of Kropotkin's that Huxley is here guilty of imagining an event that certainly never took place. No men ever, for any motive, "created society." The evolution of so high an animal as man presupposes the existence of many of the things which go to make society, to put a limit on the struggle for existence. Sexual attraction, love of offspring, habits of mutual helpfulness, must have taken deep root among our pre-human ancestors, or man would have been impossible. But this is no objection to Huxley's insight. He discerned the true character of society, which is simply a means of preserving and developing the life of man by mutual aid and co-operation, rather than by the wasteful method of competition.

We speak of *the* social organism, and as applied to modern life, the phase is valid enough. The leading nations of the earth are now bound together in a vast interdependency, and the well- or ill-being of the Japanese affects the Englishman or American. A bad crop of wheat on the Pacific slope means dear bread in London; a discovery of oil in Russia may send the Pittsburg labourer onto the streets to beg. But, at least until nearly historic times, there was no such thing as *the* social organism, there was only a vast number of largely unconnected social organisms, generally, when near enough together, in a state of ceaseless hostility. These

societies, however, if we may trust the leading authorities, had often gone far to attain perfection within a very limited scale. The primitive commune seems to have been as perfect a society as the bee-hive, all production being in common and for use, not done for individual profit. The land, almost the sole permanent asset of such primitive people, was the common property of the society; and its produce, as well as the results of the chase, were distributed "to each according to his needs." If, then, man had been no more complex a creature than the bee, an animal whose needs were strictly limited, and could be supplied from the common stock of a savage village, the social problem might have been solved long ago. The human world might have become an indefinite extension of tiny communes, each perfect it itself, and indifferent to the existence of others. But the problem of society, as far as man is concerned, is vastly greater; for only in a world society, possessing an enormously extended command over nature, can he find adequate satisfaction for his mental or even his material needs. Man, unlike the bee, is eternally seeking things beyond his immediate grasp, and inventing new means to gratify the desires of his imagination. Hence human society is progressive, not static; it is constantly acquiring new knowledge, inventing new devices. Society approaches perfection, not only in form, but in command over nature; and this command over nature can grow more rapidly when the inventions and products of one society become readily known to another. In order that human

society should attain perfection, it was necessary, not only that, within each group, "war of individual against individual should cease," but that these groups should become merged in the higher unity of the race. History is the record of the struggles through which humanity has attained to its present condition of partial unity.

Man has inherited many instincts from pre-social ages. He is compelled to live by the exploitation of external nature; and acquires, therefore, a tendency to appropriate to his own use any good thing he sees, unless restrained by some moral or other consideration acquired during later ages. Were these things not so, the primitive communism might readily have developed, by peaceful federation and exchange of knowledge, into a world Socialism, and the waste of history might have been avoided. But primitive man seems to have regarded everything outside his own social group as fair game. Not only the wild boar or the deer, but his brother man of an alien group, went straight, if captured, to the tribal larder, being regarded as no more one of the solidarity than the animals. With the advance of society, a more advanced method of exploitation was discovered; and animals capable of domestication, the dog, the ox, and man himself, became captives to their conquerors. The captive, saved from death to become the slave of the tribe, is the first pathetic instance of a long line of the oppressed, who are in society, but not of it. Incidentally, his enslavement marked an important stage in human progress. But for the

discovery of a more profitable way of exploiting enemies than by eating them, tribal unity might have been preserved, but the world would have remained a vast aggregate of tribes, each perhaps perfectly socialised, but each hostile to the others. Slavery breaks up the unity of the primitive group, by introducing a class who do not share its privileges. Henceforth man had discovered how to live, not merely by exploiting external nature, but society itself. Two men, working in co-operation, can produce more than twice as much as one working alone, apart altogether from the assurance given that, when one is injured or unwell, production will not cease altogether. A society, therefore, is richer than the same number of people, working in isolation, would ever be. Thus arises a fund which it is possible for individuals to exploit, just as they exploit external nature. Thus, also, arises an antagonism, within society itself, between those who desire to retain positions from which they can exploit the rest, and those who demand a fuller share in the common advantages.

At the dawn of history the primitive commune was already in an advanced stage of decay; and we are forced to reconstruct it from its ruins, and from the customs of isolated tribes too far from the centre of things to be affected by the revolutions of the world. Nevertheless, the work of conquest is seldom one of pure destruction—the conquerors come to exploit, and not to destroy. The wave of conquest imposes new dues and an external master on the commune; but it does not, for long, destroy

the commune itself. The inhabitants become serfs, and some of them are enslaved; but the bulk are not divorced from access to the common land. The peasant becomes a crofter, holding arable land on condition of performing certain specified duties, while he has free or conditional access to the common woods and pastures. Nevertheless, on the top of his local society has been superimposed a wider, national society, which maintains by his exploitation a life of which he is but dimly conscious, over which he has no control.

From one point of view, this new society is an enormous advance. The war-leader, now turned king, and his companions who control it, have a far wider outlook on men and things than the villagers they oppress. *The* social organism has come into being, a thing destined in the course of ages to unite all the isolated local organisms it has conquered. But, as a society, it is deplorably imperfect, placing very slight checks indeed on "the war of individual against individual." Its growth leads to a more frequent intercourse between the people of one nation and those of another. The idea of the village gives place to that of the nation, and we get the dawn of racial self-consciousness. This appeals at first to the emotions, afterwards only to the reason. The founders of the great religions grasp the idea of humanity earlier than Plato and Aristotle, to whom slavery seems an eternal and necessary institution. Among people of lower type, those to whom chiefly has been entrusted the destiny of nations, the idea advances slowly. Statesmen and

leaders of industry see much of the great world, but they are slow to realise the inherent purpose of social evolution, the abolition of "war of individual against individual." The common people have a narrower but a deeper insight. They know for ages nothing of the great world; but when one speaks to them of fellowship and equality, they, now as ever, "hear him gladly."

Into the epic of society are woven the threads of two stories, that of the gradual extension of the social organism from the village to the world, and that, but barely begun yet, of the slow permeation of the world States themselves with the root ideas of society, equality, and brotherhood. This is obviously a much greater task than that of establishing the same principles within the circle of a primitive village. Helping towards it are the ideals of the greatest men of the past, the struggles of the poorest in all ages to shake off oppression, the gradual spread of education and racial self-consciousness among the people. Against it are the forces of established things, the conservatism of human nature, and the greed of class. Outside nature watches the struggle calmly, bent only on the gradual elimination of waste. As two men, by co-operating together, can produce more than if each works in isolation, nature, ever careful of economy, will, in the long run, compel men to work that way. As they can do better if they both do their share of the work than if one of them idles and becomes a parasite on the other, she will, again in the interests of economy, abolish parasitism. Nature ignores all vested

interests. Ruthlessly she allows the poor hand-loom weaver to starve, so soon as mankind has invented a cheaper way of weaving; equally ruthlessly, she will dispose of the receiver of rent and interest, so soon as humanity has discovered a way to do without them. The life of man, as we know it, is a becoming, rather than a being, and the future evolution of the world society, so painfully created, may be a gradual approach to a perfection never entirely attained. If it is, with the achievement of the social purpose will be attained that of nature also. Only with complete co-operation will come the total elimination of waste.

Taken in its broadest aspect, Socialism is the recognition of the fraternal solidarity of the human race. Anyone, in any age, seeing this, and taking part in any movement tending towards it, might fairly claim to be a Socialist. Such a definition of Socialism would, however, be obviously too vague. In all ages there has been a faith in crude communism, an aspiration after fraternity; but the word "Socialist" first appears in the days of the Owenite controversies. Modern Socialism is the movement, spreading widely in all civilised nations, for transferring land and the instruments of production from individual to public ownership. As such, it is a part of the great world-process tending towards the complete ending of the long "war of individual against individual." Modern Socialism has its roots in previous aspirations after brotherhood down to

the dawn of history; but it has an immediate historical origin in the Industrial Revolution, which characterised the closing years of the eighteenth century. The substitution, in the course of a few generations, of the large factory, with its machine production, for the individual craftsman with his tools, enormously increased the extent to which it was possible for individuals to exploit society.

Leaving, then, this universal aspect of Socialism, as a secular tendency to remove war in all forms, including that of competition, from the world society, we confine the Socialism mainly dealt with in this book to the modern movement for the collective ownership and co-operative use of land, and the machinery of distribution and exchange created by the industrial revolution. This application of Socialist principles to modern life has already created beyond all comparison the greatest political organism, indeed the only strictly international party in the world. Socialism alone has its international congresses; Socialists alone take any real and continuous interest in the doings of their comrades in other countries. This is a modern political phenomenon of first-class importance, the right understanding of which is essential to every politician. But the purpose of this book is not the consideration of international Socialism, however interesting, but of the Socialist movement in England, a thing demanding a still narrower definition of our scope.

The general conception of Socialism as an

effort after co-operation and fraternity is simple; "the wayfaring men, though fools, cannot err therein"; but the particular application of the universal principle to any given time or place is complex beyond measure. The various results, up to a given time, of the long-drawn-out battle between the competitive, anti-social and the co-operative, social instincts of man; the political constitution of each nation, the state of its industrial and social organisation, its prejudices, customs, and laws,—above all things, perhaps, its national temper,—make the problems of applied Socialism differ enormously with every time and place. There are times and places where little can be done by the Socialist, except to proclaim the faith that is in him and spread the light; there are others in which it is best to concentrate on some immediate question of political reform, the value of which to Socialism consists only in its tendency to free new forces of growth. The Owenite Socialists, for instance, would probably have been well advised to concentrate their efforts on, at most, four immediately essential things—the extension of the suffrage, free trade, factory reform, and education—leaving to later times to reap a harvest from the social growths which must result from such reforms. To an organised democracy, however, having real control over its government, much more is possible; and the creation of a regular fighting, political force becomes the first duty of the hour. This party, to be effective, must be formed by the people

themselves, in conformity with the temper of the nation for which it has to work.

As every man contains in his body traces of every stage in the evolution of his race, so every nation contains in its laws, customs, and spirit a record of its history. Nationality is as great a fact as individuality, and one which it is as perilous to ignore. Each nation has a fundamental character of its own, imposed perhaps by racial blendings long before the dawn of history. The element of race, however, it is safest to ignore. Words like "Teutonic," "Celtic," and the like have a definite meaning when applied to language, they are utterly misleading when applied to nations. There is no reason to suppose that the ancient Aryans were of one race, and it is morally certain that all the peoples of Europe were crossed and re-crossed many times before history began. Controversies about race produce much heat and little light, and it is wiser to steer clear of them. With nationality, however, it is different. "Gaul" and "Anglo-Saxon" are terms of no modern meaning, but "Frenchman" and "Englishman" refer to realities. There is a long history behind each of these words; each expresses the sum of a certain achievement in civilisation, each marks a certain limitation. Each nationality, as each individual, will apply a universal idea in the light of its own experience, of its history and character. It will absorb into its organism only so much as it is capable of applying at any given time. As capitalistic France differs from capitalistic England,

so will Socialist France from Socialist England. In each country the Socialist idea will encounter a different reaction; it will be shaped and modified in countless ways by the environment of ideas, customs, institutions, and personalities with which it is surrounded.

Each nation is shaping its characteristic Socialism. In Russia, the ever-present fact to the friends of the people is the monstrous wickedness of the Government. All movements for reform in Russia, therefore, and, among others, Socialism, tend to be hostile to the State, to Nihilism. People tend to judge the State as an institution from the State as they know it; and if the State under which the Socialist lives be grossly tyrannical, he looks to its destruction as an essential preliminary to the common ownership of the means of production. Hence the federal Socialism of Kropotkin and others, commonly known as Anarchist Communism, is widely prevalent in Russia. However illiberal the German Government may be, it is not atrocious; it is indeed wonderfully honest and capable. Thus the German, though he may wish to democratise his Government, can hardly work himself into the frame of mind of those English theorists who consider Governments must necessarily bungle everything they touch. As a result, Anarchism has no hold on Germany, and German Socialism is the most *doctrinaire* in Europe. The German Social Democratic party is itself a marvel of organisation, and it is fairly safe to prophesy that German Socialism will be so also.

There is one thing, and one thing only, common to all Socialisms—the belief in the common ownership of land and capital. Whether the people are to control these things through the medium of a centralised State, by federal groups, or in some other way, is a secondary matter. If the hope of Socialism be not a delusion, it is fairly certain that each strongly marked nationality will ultimately work out its own compromise between the various methods for itself.

A great deal of heated discussion might have been spared if Socialists throughout the world had recognised this. There is an international aspiration in Socialism; there cannot be an international method. As this book deals only with the Socialist movement in England, it will only touch upon continental methods and ideas in so far as they have affected, for good or evil, the progress of Socialism in this country. It will be our task to trace out the progress of the Socialist idea in England, and the evolution of an instrument and a method peculiarly fitted to the character of the people. It will be necessary to trace, not only the growth of the Socialist idea itself, but that of the great movement, practical rather than idealist, that has already changed the proletariat of England from a mob into an organised democracy. The Labour Party of to-day is the fruit of an alliance between the moral enthusiasm of the Socialist, and the practical strength of the trade unionist. In that alliance lies the hope of British Socialism.

CHAPTER II

MEDIÆVAL SOCIALISM, ORGANIC AND THEORETIC

IT is not without reason that Anglo-Catholic Socialists and democratic members of the arts and crafts societies look back towards the Middle Ages with a certain regret. It is not merely that wages and the general conditions of labour, allowing for the price of food, were then, as has been clearly proved by Thorold Rogers and others, better than now, or that art was then a living social fact, not a mere pastime of the cultured few. There was then far more, both of theoretic, and what throughout this book I shall call organic Socialism in England than during the first three centuries of Protestantism. More's *Utopia* was not a book suggesting new and strange thoughts; it was the expression of ideas, which, after being popular throughout Christendom for centuries, were about, for a time, to pass out of the minds of men. The Peasants' Revolt found an eloquent spokesman in John Ball; and we therefore realise that, whether most of those who took part in it shared his communistic faith or not, there was certainly a Socialist element present. I doubt whether any of the many popular tumults of those times were quite devoid of

similar ideas. Essentially, the faith of mediæval Christendom was Socialist, and even its practice largely Socialistic. Communism was held to be the most perfect rule of life, and monks at least were expected to observe the practice of the primitive Church. Usury was considered an atrocious crime, and usury, it must be remembered, was then synonymous with interest. The authority of the fathers of the Church, then universally venerated, was on the side of Socialism, while that of the Canonist doctors, on the whole, told in the same direction.

It is desirable here to define what I mean by the terms "theoretic" and "organic" Socialism. It is certain that the earliest, pre-human founders of society had no very clear perception of what they were doing. They would probably find themselves safer by keeping close together in a herd than by wandering about as isolated individuals. In order to preserve its existence as such, the herd would have to maintain a certain amount of friendliness among its members. Gradually, by experiment, and not in pursuance of any theory, other methods of mutual helpfulness would be discovered, applied, and ultimately become instinctive and habitual. Thus the social organism would grow in perfection, in obedience to the pressure of natural needs; until, at last, even by such means alone, we might have a perfect society. This gradual knitting together of the social body through a series of institutions varying with time and place, I call organic Socialism.

But the advance of reason, and the very progress

of organic Socialism lead ultimately to speculation upon the fundamental character of society itself. For what purpose does society exist? and under what scheme of laws can it best attain this purpose? To these questions, as soon as men begin to put them, various answers are given, one of which answers has in all ages been some theory of Socialism. This theoretic Socialism, according as circumstances are favourable or the reverse, becomes an influence in moulding the life of the community, or is held in silence by a helpless few. Theoretic Socialism becomes widespread when there is much organic Socialism to suggest it; it is rare and powerless when individualism is rampant.

Society hitherto having been invariably imperfect, either extensively or intensively, organic Socialism is always imperfect. It may even include organisation for mischievous ends. Plato long ago observed that the strength of a robber band lay in its justice, not its injustice; in other words, in its organisation and the fidelity of its members to one another. A "monopoly" in some necessity of life, though organised for anti-social ends, is formed under the influence of the same tendency that, working through the ages, leads men on to Socialism. Often, indeed generally, the faults of organic Socialism are not in essential purpose, but in accidentals. The object is probably good, but it is pressed too far or not far enough. Or, again, it is allowed to take the place of objects yet more valuable, or the good in it is mixed up with evils as well.

The relations between theoretic and organic Socialism are various. The social theorist is

probably only effective when he knows how to inspire and use the organic Socialism around him. Too often, he simply ignores it, or becomes impatient at its obvious limitations. Nevertheless, Socialism as a pure theory, without aid from the constructive achievements of the people, is usually merely utopian and ineffective.

Except as a witness to the fact that the modern movement arises from a permanent demand of human nature, the theoretic Socialism of the Middle Ages is of little interest to us. Naturally it has no relevance to the special problems of to-day; while, so complete was the triumph of individualism during the three centuries following the Reformation, no historic connection can be traced between the Socialism of the older time and of our own. The organic Socialism is, however, better worth considering. Canon Jessop in his delightful account of the mediæval parish organisation, *The Story of the Great Pillage*, attributes the fine communal life of the fifteenth century villages in England to the influence of the Church. The duties of an archdeacon in these days are not very clear to the average lay mind, and most people would probably be puzzled, as Lord Granville was, to say what they are. In the Middle Ages, however, the archdeacon was a formidable person, and it is largely to the influence of the archdeacons that Canon Jessop attributes the development of mediæval rural life. I fear his account of the matter may not be free from unconscious clerical bias, but in the main he is probably right.

The mediæval archdeacons, then, kept a strong supervision over all offences against the canon law, periodically inspecting all the churches and parishes. It was their duty to act very much as a modern Government inspector of schools. If a church required repairs, or if he considered it inadequate for the congregation, an archdeacon would peremptorily order the parishioners to put it in order before his next visitation—find the money where they could. The only way the poor serfs of those days could do this was to carry on the work themselves; and the peasants were compelled to turn masons, cabinet-makers, smiths, glaziers, artistic needlewomen, and bell-casters. Under the steady pressure of centuries of arbitrary archdeacons, the wooden churches were gradually replaced by ever more elaborate Gothic buildings, decorated within and without by deft village craftsmen. As the churches rose from their labour, the rude peasants of Alfred's day became the artistic and capable craftsmen, whom the members of modern craft-guilds envy and try to imitate. They learned to make gorgeous altar-cloths and vestments, with vessels in various metals for the service of the Church, and cast, at the foot of the tower, bells whose tone can rarely be equalled by the masters of that art in our day. As their work proceeded, they took a growing pride in it. The communal spirit develops in action; and as its parish church grew beautiful under their hands, the spirit of the fellowship increased among the people of the old village. The people, of both sexes, met annually to consult on parish affairs, secular as well as religious,

and to appoint their churchwarden. In the nave, which was the property of the people, they carried on all the business of the village, administered funds for the relief of the poor, and organised festivals, often by no means of a sacred character. No man died without leaving something to the common stock; widows bequeathed their wedding rings to the parish, which vied with neighbouring villages in its attempt to develop this ancient form of municipal Socialism.

In all this there is a great deal of truth, and the higher civilisation of the fifteenth century village probably owed much to the Church. It must not be forgotten, however, that the original organisation of the manor was strongly socialistic. Woodland and pasture land were virtually common property from the first—only after centuries of triumphant individualism was it possible to enclose them, while even agricultural land was never strictly private property. There must always have been a strong communal spirit in the mediæval village, however uncouth its people. The Church, no doubt, was instrumental in making more elaborate and beautiful the common properties of the parish, but it was the previous structure of the village itself that made such communal developments possible. The mediæval parish was rooted in something earlier than any church—in man's need for fellowship, in the communal character of society.

There were no drawing-room meetings, no "mutual improvement societies," in the Middle Ages, busied about the discussion of Socialism, but the socialistic tendencies were so strong everywhere, that some-

thing of Socialism cropped up in every new development of life. The rising towns became highly organised; every trade had its "mistery" or guild, and every member of the community had his definite place in the life of the town, had some security against unemployment or accident. For every object men founded a fraternity, and bound themselves to one another by solemn oaths, by custom and by by-law for every conceivable purpose. There was, therefore, in existence at the Reformation a most highly organised and complex society, which, with greater wisdom, might have developed into Socialism centuries ago. Modern Socialists, according as their personal views tend to a centralised Socialism or to a federal communism, have looked upon its fall, and the subsequent outburst of unrestrained individualism, as a necessary prelude to the reconstruction of society on a higher basis; or as a useless, as well as brutal destruction, of a valuable, if imperfect, social structure. Probably it is easy enough to show now how with a less greedy aristocracy and wiser statesmanship, the limitations of mediæval society might have been gradually removed, without destroying what was valuable in it; but unhappily the great lords of those days *were* greedy, the statesmen were not particularly wise, and they had not our means of seeing the meaning of the great changes that would follow from the discovery of America, the revival of learning, and the inventing of the printing press. By a ruthless act of confiscation, the wealth of the parishes, accumulated during centuries, was taken

away; by successive Acts of Parliament, the common lands were nearly all appropriated to private use, and with their economic basis, the communal property and corporate life of the English village passed away. The peasant himself, deprived of any security of income, became the helpless tool of the squire and parson, dependent upon doles and charity to eke out starvation wages. Even to-day, the Wiltshire peasant is often glad to escape from the fields to a London slum, where at least he may be able to call his soul his own. In the days of Fielding, when travelling was more difficult, he had no such refuge; and was probably only too glad when his daughter took the fancy of the squire's son, and earned a dowry by her shame.

In the Middle Ages, then, there were many semi-Socialistic things actually in force; there was much vague but revolutionary Socialism preached and believed. Both lived and died at the same time. If "The Great Pillage" destroyed the practical life of the Middle Ages, More's *Utopia* was the swan-song of its aspiration after a perfect society. Except for a momentary revival among the Levellers of Cromwell's army, and for the "Digger" movement of the same time, we never again, so far as I know, catch the true note of Socialism till the days of Robert Owen. At the same time, the social organisation was being steadily broken up until "administrative nihilism" and universal competition became almost the religion of politicians. I doubt very much whether the socialistic teaching of enthusiasts had very much influence

on the practical life of the earlier time; indeed, as the history of the Franciscans shows, the teaching even of the most venerated founder can never make his followers very much better than the average of their class and time. On the other hand, I believe we can find the source of the ideal Socialist teaching in the widespread socialistic practice of the people. The lungs of thought cannot work in a vacuum, and even the greatest thinkers draw their inspiration from the social atmosphere around them. It was the continual practice of brotherhood in the village and the guild that made men dream of a wider brotherhood that should embrace the world. What gives the socialistic dreams of the Middle Ages a certain value for us, even now, is that the dreamers were in truth only advocating the logical extension of principles which they themselves saw in actual beneficial operation around them. They speak—with additions, be it admitted—of that which they know. On the whole, the semi-Socialism of the Middle Ages must be pronounced a success; it was not then, but under the individualist anarchy that succeeded, that the Poor Law became a necessity, and that every improvement in mechanics served only to lengthen the hours and reduce the wages of labour. Probably the Early Victorian economists considered Sir Thomas More a fool—fortunately he could not give his opinion of them.

The mediæval order fell owing to its inherent defect—the smallness of the social group. If the peasantry of those days had had a word for politics,

assuredly it would have been used solely with reference to the public affairs of the village. The State touched the peasant only through its taxes and its wars; he had probably very little clearer notion of its workings than a modern Hindoo about the British bureaucracy responsible for his government. In the affairs of the village, democracy had made great progress; and if nothing more powerful had existed outside the village meeting, it might have been impossible to destroy its organisation. But over the things of the State the people had no control whatever; its affairs were in the hands of the king and his nobles. The robbery of the parishes was due to an act of external violence prompted by the cupidity of the aristocracy. The democracies of Europe slept in their villages, ignorant of the growing power of the centralised States and of the necessity for controlling them, conscious only of the steady progress of their own parochial life. Suddenly, in the course of a generation, all this was swept away. As the beekeeper gathers the laborious accumulation of his hives, so the nobles of Edward VI. gathered the bequests of old villagers, dead generations ago, the works of village goldsmiths, fashioned for the love of God and the parish, the stores laid by for the poor by the poor, the ungrudged offerings of centuries towards the common stock. Democracy was stripped bare, and each of its constituent atoms left to fight for life under a rule in which for centuries it was to have no voice.

I know of no more pitiful story than that which

follows. The experience of "coming down in the world" is not a pleasant one for middle-class people, where the words imply descent from a luxurious to a merely comfortable state of life. With the poor the sentimental part of the business has perhaps less prominence, but only because the practical side of the matter obscures it. A reduction of a workman's wages is a tragedy. The difference between the purchasing power of wages in 1500 and 1600 points to a continued sequence of such tragedies with each generation of the working classes. With almost every decade the wages which the workman took home represented a smaller quantity of bread and meat; with every generation the standard of living had to be reduced. With the repeal of the Corn Laws things began to improve; but, even to-day, the British labourer can buy far less food with the wages of his nine hours' day than his ancestor of four hundred years ago could with those of one of eight.

In a striking manner Thorold Rogers shows us the steady fall in the condition of the people during the century after the Reformation. Taking as a test of material well-being the amount of time a country artisan or labourer would require to provision his family for a year with three quarters of wheat, three quarters of malt and two of oatmeal, he proves that this could be earned in 1495 in ten weeks by the artisan, and by the labourer in fifteen. By 1533, wages had advanced but little, while food was that year much dearer. The labourer would then be compelled to work nearly double

the time for the same provision, while it would take the artisan between fourteen and fifteen weeks to earn what his father could have done in ten, thirty-eight years earlier. By 1564 matters had again become worse. Then, the ordinary labourer would be compelled to work not fifteen, but forty weeks for the stipulated provision; the artisan thirty-two instead of ten. In 1595, the unskilled labourer could not obtain so much by a whole year's labour, and the skilled workman would have to labour no less than forty weeks for it. So the dismal tale went on, the process which, in one century, robbed the English workman of the slow progress of many. Yet something of the rude well-being of yet earlier times remained, for the country labourer, at least so long as his commons were unenclosed and his cottage garden intact; to the artisan, until the Industrial Revolution swept manufactures into the hands of a capitalistic class. It is not till the close of the eighteenth century that the British workman falls to his lowest place. The Combination laws of 1799 give this period of deepest degradation. Divorced, in the towns from all control over the machinery at which they worked, in the country from the soil, their guilds and clubs broken up, the feeble beginnings of Trade Unionism suppressed by law, ill-educated, overworked and shamefully underpaid, the working people of England were practically outside of society altogether. Instead of an organism, limiting among its members "the war of individual against individual," society through its agent, the State, was an

irresistible power external to the workers and utterly beyond their control, the main purpose of whose existence seemed to be to guarantee the continuance of that competitive warfare which was enslaving them. Since then two main tendencies have arisen which have done much to amend matters—the one, towards the rebuilding of working-class organisations within the framework of society itself, the growth of organic Socialism; the other, the increase of democratic power in the State. That this will ultimately lead to a society completely organised, a State completely democratic, is the faith of the Socialist.

It is worth while considering the historical significance of the break-up of the mediæval social order. How far back into the past the village community was organised it is impossible to say, but that it was at one time communist seems to be conceded. Among the villagers there was much, not only of equality, but of fraternity. While successive conquests imposed on the peasantry the duty of paying tribute to the lords of the manor, the essential internal economy of the village itself was not entirely destroyed. When the tumult of conquest has passed by, the lives of the mass of the people are usually found but little altered. The imposts upon them may be heavier, but enough must be left on which to live. With the progress, slow but steady, of early civilisation, wealth production increases; and where these imposts consist of a fixed proportion of the produce or a stated number of days' work, each generation of villagers becomes

more prosperous than the last. It is the influence of economic rent, increasing automatically the toll on industry with every increase of its efficiency, that keeps Labour permanently poor. A conquest, no doubt, by imposing unaccustomed dues, might absorb the results of progress up to a certain point; but until the invention of absolute private monoply in land, and competitive leasing, no conquest could ever deprive the people of the power and hope of future advance. The mediæval village certainly grew out of the earlier one, whose organisation it inherited, for probably, as already said, no previous conquest had destroyed the essential constitution of the village itself. This, however, is what the pillage of the guilds, followed by the Enclosure Acts of later days, effectually did. The village became a landless community, dependent upon the squire, and the individual villager a helpless proletarian. The moral effects were as great as the economic. During the three centuries that followed the Reformation, the attitudes of the rich to the poor, and of the poor to the rich, seem to change for the worse. I know of no modern literature where the working man counts for so little in life, where his inferiority in status is taken so much for granted, as that of the eighteenth century. Even kindly men, like Fielding, seem to have no idea that the honour of a gamekeeper's daughter could possibly be of any importance, either to her parents or herself. It is even more depressing to reflect that such a view of life does not appear to have been resented. The poor accepted the ethic of the rich,

admitting their dependence and ignorance as unavoidable facts of nature.

For all this, the destruction of the old order marks a decided stage in social progress. We hear much now of the social organism, and as applied to our times, the singular number represents a great truth. But in primitive times there was no such thing as *the* social organism; there was only a large number of detached social organisms. The people of one country knew little or nothing of any other, and were not dependent upon any other. The outlook on life of the average mediæval villager was a village outlook pure and simple; his politics were village politics, his law village custom, and his literature village ballads. On all these matters his word counted for something; of all things outside the village he was certainly utterly ignorant. He was pressed to serve in wars of whose purpose he knew nothing whatever; he was taxed to supply kings whose policy was as far out of his ken as if it had concerned another planet. On the top of the village, drawing subsistence from its industry, was growing a class of men whose outlook on life was at least wider than that of its inhabitants. Unobserved by the villagers, the interdependence of nations grew year by year, and the social organism of the world was gradually built up. In the politics of the growing national States the villagers took no part, and exercised no control; and the governments of the world grew up free from the influence of democracy. When the States grew strong enough to destroy the foundations from which

they sprang, there was, therefore, nothing to prevent them using their power for the purpose. The people were left helpless and dependent, having never acquired any influence on the larger Commonwealth of the State, and having lost their ancient hold on that of the village. During the centuries with which we have been dealing, therefore, the people wandered helplessly through the wilderness. Their demoralisation was only the natural consequence of life detached from any other than individual interests. When we begin again to hear of popular movements and popular organisations, it is on a larger scale. The democracy has become conscious of a life beyond that of the village; it is concerned with the politics of the nation and the world. The nineteenth century is one of struggle between an awakening people and those who have usurped powers, the value of which their ancestors never understood. In the course of the contest, the issues involved became more clearly comprehended. The democratic movement becomes more and more an effort to restore the ancient heritage of the people under the changed conditions. The growth and spread of Socialism indicate that popular government in the nation will be the same in principle as popular government in the village; they reaffirm the inherent tendency of society to become co-operative, so long as that society is controlled from within by its members, rather than exploited from without by individuals.

As far as such a thing is possible, we shall, later, endeavour to give an idea of what the society

of the future is likely to be, especially in England; for the present, it is as well to notice another difference between it and the old. So far we have been dealing mainly with the ancient village and town; and we have contrasted their life with that of later times, by no means to the advantage of the latter. This method is justifiable enough, as far as it goes, but we should never forget that the mediæval yeoman and craftsman by no means included the whole society of those days. Slavery is one of the oldest institutions in the world, and if it early ceased or was greatly modified in Western Europe, the relatively free craftsmanship of England and France rested on a basis of horrible slavery elsewhere. Before the mediæval armourer could design a breastplate, the slaves of the anvil and galley had been flogged to win the ore and carry the metal. It is only in the last processes of manufacture that the free craftsman finds scope for art; the material must be won and prepared by slave labour or some scientific substitute. The new society will be based on science; it will rest on machinery, not on slaves; and however widely the final processes of manufacture may revert in the future to the craftsman, all that heavy, necessary labour, which is incapable of developing the inventive faculties of the worker, will never again, let us hope, be done by slaves.

CHAPTER III

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

MUCH has been written about the Industrial Revolution of the later eighteenth century, and the vast change it made in the position of the British working classes. Under any circumstances, a change of so great a magnitude would have involved many adjustments, and the transition from an industry founded on labour to one based on machines, begun and almost completed in one generation, would have strained the resources of the most highly organised community. But the British working classes during the eighteenth century were not only without political power, they were, as we have seen, utterly disorganised. The guilds of the Middle Ages had disappeared; the Trade Unions of the nineteenth century had not yet come into being. Each individual workman was a mere isolated atom in a world over which he had no control whatever, a world where the conditions of his life were changing in the most unexpected manner every year. He had no skilled guidance to bargain for him with his employers, no reserve fund in case of an industrial dispute or unemployment, no influence on the Legislature, hardly even the instinct of fellowship. The moral value of Trade Unionism is not under-

stood by its opponents. In a social system based on competition, the labourer must, from time to time, need at least temporary help owing to ill-health or ill-luck, however steady and reliable he may be. When he does, it makes a vast moral difference to him where the help comes from, whether from an organisation over which he has some direct control, and is accorded to him as a right; or from a source outside himself, and is given as a charity. The Trade Unionist on sick benefit is still a full member of his society, having a voice in electing its officers and executive, and in passing or altering its rules. He is supported by the fellowship, and the very fact of his temporary dependence upon it tends rather to strengthen the moral instinct of fellowship than otherwise. The growth of the feeling of interdependence is an entirely healthy result of Trade Unionism in the working; it is not contrary but complementary to the development of personal independence. The same cannot be said of any charity, public or private, over which the recipient has no direct control. The inherent vices of our Poor Law system, as well as the hatred which the poor feel towards it, are probably due to its external character. It was made for the poor by an oligarchy, not by the poor through their own representatives. All parish doles, charitable societies, and private gifts, however necessary in default of better they may be, are demoralising. In order to accept relief with self-respect, a person must receive it from something to which he belongs, of which he is himself a part; it must be given as a right, and

not as a favour. The dispenser of "charity" who patronises the poor is a thoroughly demoralised person; unfortunately the people who receive patronage are apt to become equally demoralised also. I do not mean that they often waste or misuse the charity given, or even that they deceive to get it. It is probably the "deserving cases" among the poor, those whose claims to help are most unexceptionable, and whose use of what they are given is most praiseworthy, who receive most injury from charity. Such people are as good as those who are relieving them. The inevitable tendency of the charity system to bring giver and receiver into a relation of superior and inferior, involves an essential moral falsehood injurious to both.

The Poor Law administered by the upper classes, charity private or organised, were the only supports of the poor of England during the swift transitions of the Industrial Revolution. Trade Unionism was forbidden, quite needlessly, as effective Trade Unionism is impossible, except to people having much higher wages, and a much stronger sense of their common interest. The people had no influence whatever upon Parliament, which had virtually accepted the doctrine of *laissez faire*, as far as internal trades questions were concerned, since the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*. It was not on a disciplined labour army, with a strong *esprit de corps* and adequate reserves, but on a mob, that the new industrialism made its attack. Had steam and machinery been invented three centuries earlier,

the powerful democratic organisations of those days might possibly have been strong enough to control them from the beginning; as it was, all Labour could do was to organise Luddite riots and break the new machines. If we want to understand the actual moral progress made by the British working classes in a hundred years, we cannot do better than compare the machine-breaking rioters of the early nineteenth century with the Trade Unions, the Co-operative Societies, and the Parliamentary party of Labour at the present day. Evolution has taken its usual course, and Labour, in Spencer's appalling phrase, has passed from an "indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity."

The tender mercies of the trader are cruel. It is needless, since it has been so often done, to go over at any length the terrible story of the factory system before the Factory Acts. The brutalities of those days have left their legacies in many of the problems of our own, in the population of the Jago and the slum. Those whom society in any age neglects do not neglect to provide society with descendants rickety in moral and physical constitution. The sins of our fathers have been visited upon us—who have plenty of our own to answer for.

The three factors of industry—land, labour, and capital—vary immensely in relative importance with the progress of industry. Previous to the Industrial Revolution, the owners of land alone had much power over labour, for the little capital required to go into business in those days was readily saved. The transition from journeyman to master-worker

was an easy and frequent, if not the regular course, and it was difficult for an employer to tyrannise over a workman, who, with the savings of a year or two, could readily set up on his own account. Since the Industrial Revolution, however, capital has yearly become a more important thing. The owners of capital have developed into a class apart, to enter which the labourer must not only be thrifty and clever, but extremely lucky as well. Interest in the days of Adam Smith was low, a fact due, not surely to the abundance of capital, but to the scarcity of the demand for it. Usury in the Middle Ages was not, as a rule, exacted from the thrifty business man, who saved for his tools and stock-in-trade out of his wages as a journeyman, but from the unthrifty knight, who wasted his substance in jousts or revelry. With the Industrial Revolution, however, and the rise of machine production, the amount of capital required to commence successfully rose every decade, and the old defence of the workman — the power to set up on his own account—disappeared. The problem of Labour became the modern one—that of the control, not of land only, but of capital also.

The development of capitalism and a capitalist class brought a new point of view antagonistic to Labour into existence. The landlord rulers of Tudor England had indeed destroyed the independence of the workman, and ruined his organisations, but they had not deprived him of recognised claims on society. Oppressive as were the wages regulations made regularly at Quarter Sessions, they

did at least admit the labourer's claim to a minimum wage calculated on the current price of bread. The principle of the "living wage" was legally admitted, though its amount was determined solely by the ideas of the buyers of Labour. Aristocracy patronised, pauperised, and degraded men, but it did not starve them, or cut them adrift from society altogether. It was otherwise with the new plutocracy. With it the working man could be as "independent" as he liked, so long as he was helpless; it did not want to patronise, but simply to use him. Plutocracy, with its doctrine of *laissez faire*, took no cognisance of duties between employer and employed, and recognised only the right, not the duties of property. We are confronted, at the opening of the nineteenth century, with two distinct schools of thought, both hostile to the workers—the dying ethic of aristocracy, with its conception of the relations between workman and employer as one of patronage and dependence, and the new plutocratic ethic of pure individualism, which treated questions of wages and labour conditions as matters of mere bargaining between the individual employer and the individual worker. Needless to say, perhaps, that the one set of ideas stands at the basis of old-fashioned Toryism, the other of traditional Liberalism. No doubt, under the influence of a democratic franchise and of the wear and tear of life, this is true now of neither party, but it certainly was true of their predecessors during the earlier half of last century.

The rapid collapse, during the latter half of the eighteenth century, of the doctrine of patronage

was a terrible practical blow to the workers at the time, but it was an invaluable moral tonic all the same. The new capitalist employer recognising no limit below which he might beat down wages, and no obligation outside the factory towards his hands, was a man from whom nothing could be got except by organisation. Had the earlier factory owners recognised any duty towards their employees, we might have been spared a national shame, but it is more than probable the working classes would never have organised and never have recovered from the slough of moral dependence in which the Industrial Revolution found them. But against people who bought their labour, often a drug in the market, always at the lowest competitive price, and who owned all the instruments of production, the workers were obliged to organise, so soon and so far as that was possible to them, and to depend in all things on their own exertions. Long before effective organisation was possible, they were compelled to think for themselves, to busy their minds about the fundamental problems of government, to ponder over Radicalism, Chartism, and Socialism.

The position of the unorganised town worker in modern industry is perhaps the most helpless of any known to history. For him virtually organised society hardly exists; he is as much alone in the fight for existence, however different the conditions of that battle may be, as the wolf who is separated from the pack. And the conditions are ceaselessly changing. Every day new inventions are doing with little labour what older methods did

with much, and driving men helplessly on to the streets. The demand for labour has never, since the Industrial Revolution, been in excess of the supply, taking the field of industry as a whole, though in individual trades and places this may often have been the case. There has always been a large reserve army of unemployed, anxious at any price to obtain work to do. In 1907, in a period of rapidly growing trade and increasing wealth, in spite of the fact that their action outraged the moral sense of the whole Labour world in a way it is difficult for the average middle-class man to understand, English blacklegs could be found to take the places of the Antwerp dockers on strike. No action perhaps has caused more people to feel deeply ashamed of their country than this, and no people probably feel a more thoroughgoing self-contempt than these poor blacklegs—who yet must live. Yet in spite of the growing feeling of the workers' solidarity, the blackleg and the strike-breaker still continue, for the condition of the unemployed man is desperate; and even in the best times there are hundreds of thousands of unemployed among us. Men are being trained in thousands to work a particular machine; and as soon as they have learnt their trade, and grown too old and too specialised to learn any other, some clever inventor brings out a new and quicker machine that dispenses with them for good. Men crowd the factory gates seeking work, who, but for Trade Union support, and legal restrictions on the free action of employers, would be compelled to accept it on any terms.

The unorganised and legally unprotected workmen, in the early days of the Industrial Revolution, their independence of spirit sapped by generations of aristocratic patronage, were not only utterly unable to protect themselves, they were incapable of seeing any way to a remedy. There is this essential difference, among others, between the Socialist movement of the early years of the nineteenth century and that of the present day, that the former was almost independent of popular support in any real sense. With a certain reservation in favour of Robert Owen himself, the thing that strikes the modern student most forcibly in reading the Radicalism and Socialism of earlier days is the inadequate grasp even the ablest men had of the problems they were trying to solve. The generally chaotic character of Chartist thought, for instance, is concealed only by its concentration on the Charter; outside the basis of common agreement, Chartism appears as a mere jumble of contradictory aspirations. It is probable that, had the political Charter been conceded, all Chartists would have been disappointed at the result; it is certain that, if any section of the movement had been satisfied, many others would have been disgusted.

But if this was the state of things among educated reformers, and the best of the working classes, what must it have been among the rank and file? I think the modern reformer is apt to look upon his predecessors of Early Victorian times with too favourable an eye. He knows the thoughts only of the few who could read and write for the better

class weekly press, the Alton Locks and Felix Holts of days gone by. He compares these, not much to the advantage of the latter, with the "*Daily Mail* young men" of the present day, and, in so doing, he does our ancestors of Chartist days more than justice. Behind the Felix Holts there was a mob of illiterate and brutalised men, whose share in the agitations of those days was confined to bread riots and machine breaking. Those who buy the halfpenny yellow-press are often crude and barbarous enough; but there is no reason to suppose they are any worse or less intelligent than the men who watched the prize fights or took part in the riots of Early Victorian times.

Considering the state of popular education, it is hardly wonderful that it was reserved to a capitalist to be the first to see clearly the social importance of the Industrial Revolution. Robert Owen, it must be admitted, was a man of extraordinary insight, when we think of the circumstances of his life and environment. An enthusiast for the new methods of machine production, he nevertheless seems, from the first, to have realised what most men of his class even now fail to see, that machine production, organised entirely for the profit of private persons, must mean invariably the poverty and degradation of the workers. Himself one of the most capable business men of his day,—leaving school at ten, and starting life with two pounds in his pocket, this eighteenth century Dick Whittington was a partner in a large Manchester firm at nineteen, and a wealthy man in his third decade,

—he was, from the first, capable of looking at the new industrialism by which he made his wealth from a social rather than a personal point of view. He had none of the narrowness of the average self-made man, but looked at the new force of machinery with a disinterested detachment which only gained strength by the intimate knowledge his practical experience as a manufacturer gave to him. Capable beyond others in the ability to acquire money, he was utterly devoid of the love of it, and spent a vast fortune cheerfully in efforts to make working men independent of the services of his own class. And this he did at a time when there was nothing in the social spirit around to encourage him. If there was ever an instance of a man whose opinions were *not* made for him by his environment, who, in other words, was an exception to Owen's own doctrine, that man was Robert Owen. The practical effect of his work and life it is indeed difficult to estimate; according as we look at it from one or another point of view, we are apt to over- or under-estimate it; but of the clearness of his general insight no modern Socialist should entertain any doubt. He was not, indeed, the first man since the Industrial Revolution whom we may call a Socialist,—the idealist side of the Socialist spirit appears strongly in Shelley and Blake, before Owen himself had got much beyond the stage of model factory experiments, while Babeuf, Cabet, and St. Simon preceded him in France,—but his Socialism marks a distinct advance on anything that had gone before. The Socialism of Robert Owen is

not mere Utopianism — it is the Socialism of a practical man of affairs, based on an intimate acquaintance of the social problems of his own time, and closely related to them. It is a programme and not a mere inspiration. His limitations are, also, those of his own time, and it is difficult to say how anyone in his day could have avoided them. He appears to have ignored the place of art in life, and not to have seen the inferiority of machine-made products as compared with those made by hand. But in this he only shared the blindness common to all men before the days of Ruskin and the æsthetic movement of the early eighties. He essayed, too, at least in the earlier days of his propaganda, too much to influence the workers from without, trying, of course vainly, to induce the governing classes to interest themselves in the work of social reform. Yet it is difficult to see what else he could have done at the time. We have already shown how utterly disorganised the working classes were, how incapable, indeed, of any organisation. They were also destitute of political power, and miserably underpaid. What could they do to help themselves? Help, if it was to come at all, must come from the only people who then had the power, if they only had the will, to accord it, and to them, at first, Robert Owen appealed. Later, he turned to the people, and to them indeed his work was not utterly wasted, though generations were to pass before the full effect of it could be seen.

CHAPTER IV

EARLY VICTORIAN SOCIALISM

THE attempt to revert to Protection has had the incidental effect of reviving public knowledge of the condition of England question in the first half of the nineteenth century. From the pages of writers like Carlyle and Kingsley, from the reports of contemporary Royal Commissions, from the literature of the Anti-Corn Law League, of the Owenites and Chartists, comes the same tale of widespread poverty. Dear food and low wages, long hours of toil, not only for men, but for women and children, bad houses, irregular work, ignorance and oppression in field and factory, were the universal lot of the British working classes. It is a terrible story, enlightened by the labours of many humane men and women, who, for devotion and ability, have never been surpassed.

There was a vast fund of humanitarian energy in Early Victorian England, combined with a singular lack of common purpose among the humanitarians themselves. To the reform of the Factory Acts, the leaders of the Anti-Corn Law League were mostly either actively hostile or indifferent, while Ashley was equally opposed to Free Trade. The Chartists, on the other hand, looked, as a whole,

exclusively to electoral reform; though, as I have already hinted, there were possibly almost as many opinions among the Chartists as there were in England outside their movement. Even Socialism was not united; and though the Co-operative movement of to-day owes something both to the Owenites and Christian Socialists, the two movements were distinct in time and purpose.

England at the time was like a discontented giant, conscious generally of vast injustice, but utterly unable to decide on a remedy. Definite purpose, to deal with particular evils, could be found in innumerable movements of the time; but the problems of the day were by no means thought out, nor did the means exist to provide the remedy. We must never forget that revolutions are not made by law, but by the gradual growth of a new order among the people. Within the shell of an old society, the new takes form, and in due time is brought to birth; but it is among the people, not in Parliament, that it first takes shape. Were the rulers of the world wise, law could do much, by timely modifications, to facilitate social progress; but it cannot do the work allotted by nature to the people themselves; a higher social organisation demands a more highly organised people.

If, therefore, at first sight, the widespread humanitarianism of two generations ago appears to us chaotic and ineffective; if much that it was then designed to do remains undone, we must remember that reformers in those days were dealing with a

people that had lost the habit of association,—with a mob, and not with a nation. Broadly speaking, the reformers may be divided into two classes—those who aimed at some particular and specially urgent reform, and those who saw the fundamental falsehood of the existing order, and proposed to apply the only effective remedy, Socialism. To the first, in the main, was accorded success; to the second, apparent failure. Cobden and Bright saw the obnoxious Corn Law repealed; Ashley saw the grossest abuses of the factory system restrained; the older Chartists lived to see at least vote by ballot and virtual manhood suffrage — they never aimed at more—accomplished facts. It was otherwise with the ardent groups of Socialists, Owenite and Christian, who looked for the establishment of a new society, ruled on essentially different principles from the old—to a Co-operative Commonwealth. Their object could not be accomplished by Parliament alone, and, indeed, was only possible to a people among whom the habit of association was deeply rooted. You can repeal a tax and appoint factory inspectors by Act of Parliament, and what politicians can do, Cobden and Lord Ashley did; but you cannot rebuild in a moment the long-lost habit of co-operation, or make of a mob a nation.

The Early Victorian Socialists, then, failed in their object; they failed even to make a permanent place in English thought for the idea of Socialism. One of the most remarkable features of the movement in England is the way in which, for a

generation, all Socialism seems to disappear. There was some ground for the opinion common up to the last year or two, that Socialism was contrary to British instincts, and would remain for ever a continental idea; for long, indeed, there was little in the life of this country to contradict such a theory. There is a complete break in time between Robert Owen and Mr. Hyndman, between the Socialism of Kingsley and Maurice and that of the Guild of St. Matthew. No existing Socialist organisation in England can claim a history of over thirty years, while it is only within half that time that Socialism has again become a power in the land. The Labour Party in the British Parliament is almost the youngest organisation of its kind in Europe, though no country started earlier in the race.

All this could not be unless the early Socialists had grievously failed to realise their hopes. The really effective reformers of the age were those who, like Ashley and Cobden, devoted their efforts to single, immediately practicable reforms, and whose objects could be made acceptable to the parties then dominant in Parliament. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that Owenism was an ineffective force. Far from it. While anxious to go beyond anything dreamt of by Cobden and Ashley, Owen and his followers were believers in the reforms associated with these great names. Owen was the first advocate of factory reform in England; and, before the foundation of the Anti-Corn Law League, he had declared himself in favour of Free Trade. In the

latter agitation, it is true, the Socialists took little part; but the factory legislation was as much a triumph for them as for anyone else. Owenism was, then, not without its direct influence on legislation, though posterity has quite rightly awarded the palm for immediate usefulness to those who directed their attention to immediately practicable reforms.

And without the repeal of the Corn Laws and the Factory Acts, it is safe to say that no permanent improvement in the condition of the British people would have been possible. The working classes were in no condition to help themselves, without some alteration in the law to leave their action free. It is the supreme glory of Richard Cobden that he saw, and concentrated the attention of England upon, the first and then most vital of all reforms, the effect of which has been to render all subsequent progress possible. It is true he had no conception of a higher social order than that in which he had been born, that he by no means approved all the consequences of the very measure with which his name is associated. I have little doubt that the rapid progress of industrial organisation among the workers that marked the generation after the repeal of the Corn Laws would have been impossible without that measure. It was mainly because the early Socialists had to appeal to a people destitute of any democratic organisations of any importance of their own that they failed. What was wanted was some immediate and widespread improvement in the condition of the mass of the people, something that

would give the opportunity for effective organisation, that was wanted. This Free Trade, supplemented by the Factory Acts, brought about. Cobden[1] hated Trade Unions, and passed the measure that rendered effective unionism possible. Cobden would certainly have disapproved of Socialism, yet the Trade Unionism to which he gave its great opportunity is the most effective school of Socialism.

The history of the great voluntary creations of British democracy, Trade Unionism, and Co-operation, may roughly be divided into two periods, that which preceded, and that which followed the Repeal of the Corn Laws. In the twenties, Robert Owen and his followers were essaying to establish societies for co-operative production, and his efforts continued until the failure of his Queenwood enterprise in 1844. These experiments were supported by much ampler means, and instituted by men of better education and certainly not in any way inferior to the Rochdale pioneers. Yet the Owenite undertakings failed one and all, while the Rochdale Society has become the foundation of one of the greatest facts of modern life. Similarly with Trade Unionism. It will be my duty later to trace the history of the generation of industrial organisation; here it will be enough to note that, as in the case of Co-operation, really successful Trade Unionism in England dates from the time of Free Trade. A new environment, favourable to the

[1] Cobden no doubt accepted without question the then current economic doctrine of the wages fund. If that exploded theory were sound, a Trade Union would be the narrow monopoly he imagined it to be.

growth of organisation, had been unconsciously created, and things before difficult or impossible were now comparately easy. For generations, local Trade Unions had risen and fallen in England, but the permanent, national organisations are of later date.

What is the reason of this? Anyone studying the state of things existing in England during the days of Protection will realise that the people were too poor to organise. Existence, to them, was a desperate struggle for daily bread; they had no funds out of which to provide for the future. It is only out of the surplus left, after the absolutely necessary expenses of living have been provided, that a man can join a Trade Union, or assist in founding a Co-operative Store. The radical flaw in the earlier Trade Unionism was the smallness of the weekly subscription, rendered necessary by the abject poverty of the members. "The destruction of the poor is their poverty"; and just as it is now impossible for sweated seamstresses and starving slum dwellers to organise, so it was impossible for any of the manual labourers to do so sixty years ago. So it is also with Co-operation. The twenty-eight one pound shares originally subscribed by the Rochdale pioneers probably took as much effort in the saving as any of the great achievements of Co-operation since have done.

Now the Repeal of the Corn Laws produced a sudden and unexpected regularity in the supply of food; it greatly steadied employment. A bad harvest no longer meant either famine prices for

bread or utter stagnation in trade. Previously, a rise in the price of bread absorbed such money as the people usually spent in cotton and woollen goods in food, thus destroying the home market for clothing, and throwing the textile operatives out of employment. Nor was there any remedy in an increase of foreign trade, except in so far as famine prices for food drew foreign corn over the tariff wall. But, under the new state of things, a bad harvest was much less likely to raise the price of corn so far as to ruin the home market for other things; while the added demand for foreign corn could only be paid for by home manufactures. The periodic depressions of trade, to which we are still subject, give only a very faint idea of "hard times" as understood by our fathers. The secret of the early failures and later successes of Co-operation and Trades Unionism in England is to be found in the changed environment amidst which they had to struggle into existence. Free Trade brought to the English people, without loss of wages, cheaper food; and gave them, trained as they were in a rigid economy, the financial basis for organisation.

Primarily, I believe, the workers organised themselves. Had the Owenites and Christian Socialists never existed, I believe we should still have had by now powerful Trade Unions, and probably also wealthy Co-operative Societies. These institutions arose, in the main, because the working people were human, and, as human beings, they co-operated for their common purpose, as soon as circumstances gave

them a chance. As in the polity of nature, man or the forerunners of man founded society itself, finding associated effort more effective than isolated; so among the hostile and indifferent forces of nineteenth century society, the working classes founded their Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies for mutual profit and protection; so, indeed, in all ages, will man combine for common purposes, simply for the reason that such purposes are, as a matter of fact, apart altogether from the teachings of religious or social moralists, more easily obtained that way. Yet, in the Co-operative movement at least, the inspiration of the Socialists certainly counted for much, and their numerous experiments taught the early co-operators what to avoid. Even in their own days and those immediately succeeding them, they achieved much, and the modern Socialist owes gratitude as well as reverence to these pioneers.

Robert Owen abhorred religious or anti-religious controversy, two things which spring from the same root, a lack of temper and proportion. He was not a believer in the accepted religion of the day, however, and could not indoctrinate his contemporaries with the same spirit. In spite of his efforts to avoid sectarian discussions, the fact of his scepticism became known, and was made the excuse, if not the reason, for the bitter and unreasonable opposition his movement encountered. The Early Victorian Socialists were not politicians like the later ones, and it is difficult for us to understand the violent opposition to them. Socialists

have been roughly handled, even in recent times, but generally only when their propaganda has caused practical inconvenience to one or other of the opposing parties. People may talk Socialism as much as they like now; it is only when too successful an advocate may oust a favoured Government or Opposition candidate that it will occur to anyone to abuse, much less molest him. Nor, if any group of enthusiasts cared to form a commune of their own, would anyone object. Owenism was mainly a propaganda of ideas; its immediate aim was the formation of voluntary co-operative groups to try experiments in the new life. It interfered with the convenience of parties and sects no more than such institutions as the Garden City Association do now. No doubt, its disciples gave support to movements such as that for the Factory Acts, while Owen once stood for Parliament. But Whig and Tory were left to fight out their party battles pretty much as they would have done had Robert Owen never been born. But the very existence of such a movement was a criticism of the life of the age; if Owen was right, those in authority were altogether wrong. This was enough to arouse opposition and alarm, an opposition ready to take advantage of any decent pretext for active interference.

This was found in the religious opinions of Owen himself, and particularly in the determinist doctrines of which he was a rather insistent advocate. The most tolerant of men, the head of a pious household, Owen was represented as one who wished

to overturn Christianity; and, with him, his followers, many of them devout church members, were indiscrimately involved. No doubt this tended to give Socialism a bad start in England. The average Englishman's attitude towards religion is one of his national peculiarities. With numerous exceptions, of course, he is unwilling either to be influenced by or to reject the accepted creed of the day. He lives his own virtually Pagan life, paying no attention whatever to Christianity, until somebody tells him that a new movement is anti-Christian. Then he permits the devotees of church or chapel to persuade him that he is shocked; and a perfectly sober and useful movement may be considerably damaged or delayed by sectarian clamour, in which the average man is supposed to take part.

No doubt, then, the assumption that Owen's opinions and supposed opinions were an essential part of Socialism, did considerable injury to Socialism itself; and no small service to the cause was performed by Frederick Denison Maurice when he initiated the Christian Socialist movement. By so doing, Maurice showed that Christian theology could itself bring a man to conclusions very similar to those Owen had learnt from the practical life of a business man. The way in which other movements, originally apparently not connected with Socialism, tend to drift into it is characteristic of the English movement, perhaps more than elsewhere. The philosophic Churchmanship of Maurice, and the æsthetic revival did not on the surface promise

much for Socialism; yet they have been the means of bringing a crowd of militant artists and clergymen into the movement. Maurice seems to have brought to bear on the question perhaps the most profoundly philosophic mind ever given to the Socialist movement in England. Unfortunately, he somewhat lacked the gift of lucid expression, and perhaps Kingsley was not quite a competent interpreter, in spite of his literary ability. Maurice was, more than any other man, the inspirer of all that is best in the modern Church; but left to himself, he would have been, in the world of action, singularly ineffective. Matthew Arnold looked upon belief in machinery as a vice of the English mind, an opinion which Arnold did not perceive was only half a censure. Belief in machinery is the vice and also the merit of the practical mind, for after all machinery of some sort is essential to the doing of anything. Maurice inspired men, but he carried to excess Arnold's distrust of machinery. He failed to see that hostility to machinery is just as materialistic as faith in it; and, having created in many men the spirit of Christian Socialism, he was apt to hamper them in the exercise of the very spirit he had raised. You cannot make effective use of any political machinery, however good, until you have a moral enthusiasm behind it; nor, when you have aroused adequate enthusiasm, can you prevent it finding ways and means to express itself. If you attempt to do this, the enthusiasm itself will too probably die out.

Though, then, the Christian Socialist movement

which came to the front when Owen was an old man, and after the failure of the Chartist rising of 1848, gave a useful fillip to the Co-operative movement, it failed to achieve all that might have been accomplished, when we consider the genius of its founder, and the brilliant array of men whom he inspired. What it did was to destroy for ever in England that definite hostility between advanced politics and established religion which has, to the loss of both, been characteristic of Socialism on the Continent. By justifying Socialism—the co-operative and family conception of society—from the teachings of Christ and the early Church, Maurice took the Tory defenders of religion in the flank. He aided also in modifying all future forms of Socialism in accordance with the English temperament, by insuring in the ranks of future Socialist bodies the infusion of a number of earnest men who regarded Socialism as a fundamental part of their religion. Among a people such as the English, essentially inclined to compromise, and unwilling definitely to break with any established belief or custom, this service to the cause was an invaluable one, and smoothed the way for the spread of Socialism among people who would probably, but for Maurice, never have listened to it.

The Early Victorian Socialists, Christian and Owenite, affected next to nothing in politics; nor, with the working classes destitute of political power, is it easy to see how they could have done. As a matter of fact, they hardly tried. The Socialists underestimated the importance of

political reform almost as much as the Chartists overestimated it. It was left to the Chartists and Radicals to keep alive the demand for the vote, without which even a better organised democracy could have made small progress with Socialism. The period was one in which, as I have said, the democratic movement was in a state of chaos, each of the workers' friends showing little sympathy with and little understanding of another. The fact that, to the serious-minded men of the day, Carlyle figured as a prophet—that, indeed, he was a most powerful inspiration to his time—is significant. Carlyle's deep sympathy with oppression, his hatred of injustice, combined with utter inability to suggest any practical remedy for the evils of the time, were alike characteristic of the age. So long as the capitalist classes held all political power, it is fairly safe to assume that they never would have allowed the co-operative associations of the Socialists to develop far enough to make the workers independent of them. No doubt the new associations would not have been robbed in the shameless and open manner in which the guilds were plundered; but we may be certain there would have been no adequate law to protect Trade Union funds, and the growth of Co-operation would have been hedged with restrictions, so soon as it became inconvenient to a shopkeeping class having votes. On the other hand, the Chartist movement itself, united as it was solely on a programme of franchise reform, is almost pathetic in its strange want of relation to the actual problem of poverty.

Unless the people had some definite conception of how to use their votes for the betterment of their lives, it was true enough, as the Socialists said, that votes were useless to them. The two movements should have gone hand in hand, and should each have been much more closely identified with the general political movement of the time. Modern Socialism gathers into a unity the scattered humanitarianism of the forties. It is social, like Owenism; it is democratic, like Chartism; it resists food and all indirect taxes as strongly as Cobden.

But after all, the main reason why, after raising the enthusiasm of thousands and making multitudes of converts, the Socialist movement in England disappeared from sight for a generation, is that it appealed to an unorganised people. In the next chapter we shall see the apprenticeship of the people, the forty years' travel in the wilderness, during which a generation arose fitted to lead the democracy into the promised land. The working-class leader of the present day may not be a better man than his prototype of sixty years ago, but he has had a practical business and political training of which the older generation were entirely destitute. The mechanics and labourers who support him, too, look upon life very differently. They have built up a world of their own, with institutions to which they are proud to belong, and whose workings they understand. Two million trade unionists, three million co-operators have relearned the lesson, forgotten since the destruction of the guilds, the first lesson

of Socialism, that the well-being of man can best be attained by co-operation with his fellows. The most eloquent Socialist could not have taught this half so well as experience has done. The people learn Socialism by living it.

CHAPTER V

THE APPRENTICESHIP

As the student of English democracy passes from the first decade of the Victorian era into the fifties and sixties, he cannot but be conscious of a subtle change in the temper of the democracy itself. The inspiring ideals of Owen no longer hold the field; the Chartist movement dies out; the Free Traders have accomplished their aim; improvements in factory legislation are accepted as routine matters of reform. Among the working classes themselves the change is specially marked. There is a decided disinclination to listen to Utopian idealism, and Trade Unions begin to pride themselves on their economic orthodoxy. The change affects, to some extent, even those who survive from an earlier time. Owenites like Lloyd Jones, and Christian Socialists like E. Vansittart Neale, cease to agitate outside, and take a more modest part in aiding by advice the young Co-operative movement. Judge Hughes helps with his legal knowledge in the defence of the Trade Unions, aided, as he is, by the young enthusiasts of Positivism. The kind of democratic work alters with the spirit of it. Everywhere there is a tendency to forget Utopia and to confine all efforts after

constructive betterment to things immediately possible.

The method, indeed, of contemporary social evolution had changed. In the earlier enthusiasm men dreamed great things, and strove to inspire their fellows. When the effect of their missionary work had proceeded far enough, they attempted something as a first step towards the ultimate attainment of their great hopes. But the motive of the early Socialist was always to make a step towards the higher order. In whatever he did he "followed the gleam," however modest the step he might be compelled to take towards it.

The method of Mid-Victorian Trades Unionism was essentially different. Its leaders were, for the most part, not idealists at all. They accepted, in the main, the existing order of things; and merely attempted, as a trading concern would do, to make the best of circumstances, with which they had no vital quarrel, for their own clients. The growing Trades Unions were not designed to aid anybody but the members of special trades; they themselves and their immediate work were very generally regarded as ends in themselves. The whole, or almost the whole, attention of the working-class leaders became concerned with the work of practical organisation, with forming and enforcing rules, framing constitutions, training men to negotiate with employing firms, studying the details and conditions of trade, and going through all the routine and uninspiring work of great organisations struggling to survive and

grow among the complex conditions of the modern world.

Whether, as I believe, this change was due to the reflex effect of the repeal of the Corn Laws, at least it was the consequence of some definite improvement in the condition of the workers. As long as there is good work of immediate practical utility to do, the bulk of men will generally attend to it, leaving ultimate ideals alone. This is, perhaps, just as well, though rather trying to the patience of poets and idealists. As soon as the workers found a way to increase their wages in the present, by Trade Union effort and by slow rises, they readily gave up for a time all attempts to procure the millennium for posterity. A time arrived when the older unionists were the enthusiasts, and the younger ones those most anxious to confine the scope of their union's efforts to the most narrow and immediate ends.

The first manifestation of the new spirit was the foundation of the great Amalgamated Society of Engineers, that great union which, starting as the most *bourgeois* of all working-class organisations, has gradually developed with the times, till it is now taking the lead in committing the Labour Party to avowed Socialism. The society, founded in 1851, was an attempt to gather into a single body all the various workers in iron throughout the United Kingdom. Through the exertions of William Newton, and of Allan, secretary of the Journeymen Steam-Engine and Machine Makers' Society of Manchester, the leading local unions

of the Metropolitan area were amalgamated with those of Lancashire and Birmingham. The aim of the new society was defined in the preface to the rules of that from which it sprung as follows :—

> The youth who has the good fortune and inclination for preparing himself as a useful member of society by the study of physics, and who studies that profession with success so as to obtain his diploma from the Surgeons' Hall or College of Surgeons, naturally expects, in some measure, that he is entitled to privileges to which the pretending quack can lay no claim ; and if in the practice of that useful profession he finds himself injured by such a pretender, he has the power of instituting a course of law against him. Such are the benefits connected with the learned professions. But the mechanic, though he may expend nearly an equal fortune and sacrifice an equal proportion of his life in becoming acquainted with the different branches of useful mechanism, has no law to protect his privileges.[1]

"He is therefore urged," say Mr. and Mrs. Webb, "to join the society, which aims at securing the same protection of his trade against interlopers as is enjoyed by the learned professions." This is a fall from the lofty ideals of Owenism with a vengeance! and it would be unjust to suppose that the aim of working-class Trade Unionism was ever quite so narrow as that of similar organisations among the "learned professions." It is true, however, that from this time the main, almost the sole, aim of Trade Unionism became everywhere the maintenance of a standard rate of pay in each

[1] Preface to the rules of the Journeymen Steam-Engine, Machine Makers, and Millwrights' Friendly Society, edition of 1845. Quoted in *History of Trade Unionism*, by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, p. 199.

particular trade, under existing capitalistic conditions, not the inauguration of a new era in which all the workers within and without the unions could share. Efforts were made to influence Parliament and secure democratic measures, chiefly for the security of Trade Unions, and for factory reform; but the old idealism, for the time, disappears. Mid-Victorian England was a strange second edition of the eighteenth century, displaying almost an equal frost of thought and enthusiasm, but showing, nevertheless, the enormous advance that had been made in the generation of stormy political and social agitation which preceded it. The great Exhibition of 1851 was the high-water mark of middle-class rule in England. Chartist and Owenite had become quiet; even the Trade Unionist accepted the economics of the *bourgeoisie*.

But to set against this temporary loss of idealism was a great gain. Beginning with a relatively high subscription, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was, from the first, the friendly society as well as the fighting force of its members, acquiring thereby a financial standing which no society before it had attained. Its early secretaries were entirely middle-class in their conception of politics, and in the methods through which they tried to influence Parliaments. Men of high probity, they impressed the middle-class employers with whom they had to deal, both by their understanding of business needs, and the moderation of their demands in trade disputes. The employer found that he could discuss questions of wages and hours with the

delegates of the new unionism in the same business spirit in which he negotiated for the purchase of raw material or the sale of his produce. The success of Newton and Allan can be seen in the steady rise of the society they were the means of founding. The membership of the Amalgamation was 5000 at the start; at the close of its first quinquennial period it had risen to 12,553, while it has risen with practically every five years since.

It was a great gain that the new movement was not initiated by humanitarian business men or by idealist clergymen, but by the workers themselves. From this time middle-class enthusiasts chiefly appear on the scene as helpers, rather than organisers of the workers. The admirable work done by Mr. Frederic Harrison and other Positivists for Trade Unionism, or by Vansittart Neale and men of like mind for the Co-operators, took the form chiefly of legal and other trained help, given from without, to organisations initiated and controlled by working-men. Vitally, this change meant real progress. Every step now gained was one that could be held, and meant more, not less, than those who made it realised. Under these circumstances, the work of such Socialists as the generation might produce became entirely altered. Hitherto the people had ideals without organisations, now they were creating powerful organisations whose chief defect was a lack of ideals. The true work of the Socialist since 1860 has been to inspire the Trade Unions

with his wider idealism, to permeate the organised workers with Socialism. How slowly Socialists realised this we shall see; but until they did, Socialism in England was, not a force, but a cry.

Mr. and Mrs. Webb have worked out for us with admirable thoroughness the development of modern Trade Unionism. But comparatively recent as is their work, it is only since it was published that we can see the political effect of what the Union builders were doing. It does not follow in the least that the purpose for which man found a new institution will be that which it achieves. As in the polity of nature, so in that of man, each organism is shaped, not only by its own conscious purpose, but by its complex environment. Growth from within is met and restrained by resistance from without. Desirable and proposed developments meet with unexpected resistance; unexpected openings occur which lead to developments equally unforeseen. As a new institution arises and grows strong, it steadily develops from a mechanism into an organism, doing ever what it can, and not what its founders originally considered it ought. It takes on new functions and drops old as opportunity or need occurs. This is seen in any institution that has survived from very ancient times. The wishes of the "pious founder" count for very little in the administration of an ancient charity, the conduct of which is determined almost exclusively by the temper and habits of the centuries through which it lives. No wish of the testator that his

bequest should "serve God and the poor" will prevent, in an age of corruption, the gradual diversion of the funds to the use of those who can afford to pay. It is equally certain that no provision made by him for clerical or oligarchical control would survive long in an age of democracy. The silent, ceaseless changes in the temper and constitution of society shape everything from the religion of a nation to the pattern of its clothes. Every new thing, starting with an adequate economic basis to ensure survival, becomes shaped into harmony with its surroundings.

"Starting with an adequate economic basis," I have said; and the qualification is vital. The business man commencing with inadequate capital, the Trade Union started on too low a weekly contribution, or by men who can afford no contribution at all, will equally fail to survive. A short struggle to realise some perhaps impossible ideal will before long end in defeat, and business or union will end in failure. When the Engineers fixed their weekly subscription at a shilling — a sum without precedent in those days—they initiated modern Trade Unionism. Henceforth the transition from the isolated, ineffective clubs of former days to the permanent Trade Unions of to-day was only a question of time. No strike can be fought to a successful issue without an adequate rate of subscription; no employer will deal seriously with men who cannot point to a substantial reserve fund. And, paradoxical as it may sound, it is easier to collect subscriptions of a shilling a week

than of a penny. It is not worth while to spend time or energy over a forgetful member when the weekly sum wanted from him is too small, and no one will take the trouble to prevent him lapsing from the Society altogether. Only when the subscriptions are adequate in amount, and paid officials are there to look after them, is the income of a Society reliable or adequate. The Union grows strong and its members gradually develop a corporate spirit. They lose insensibly the purely individualistic outlook on life. The worker ceases to be a mere agitator, and becomes a citizen.

It is the high rate of subscription, rendered possible, I believe, by the regular and moderate price of bread due to free trade, rather than its excellent constitution, that rendered the Amalgamated Society of Engineers such a success. Other organisations proceeding on a federal plan, notably the Cotton Operatives, have since greatly improved on the scheme of the Engineers; but the new organisation made soon a profound impression on the Trade Union world. In 1859 a strike against a London firm of builders was replied to by the employers by a general lockout in the building trade, and Trade Unionists everywhere felt the interests of Unionism attacked, and supported the locked-out building trades on a more lavish scale than had ever been done before. Conspicuous among the rest were the Engineers, who earned the admiration of their fellow Trade Unionists by three successive weekly donations of £1000 each. This was a testimony to the strength of the new

method not lost upon other workmen, and the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, constructed on the Engineers' model, arose as a result of the dispute.

Co-operation is less important than Trade Unionism for the purposes of this book, because of its slight touch on politics, and because, though eligible under the constitution of the Labour Party, the English Societies have not yet affiliated with that body, but we must not forget that all this time the workers were becoming doubly organised, through Co-operation as well as Trade Unionism. This movement was aiding in many ways the contemporary growth of the Trade Societies. It, also, was placing a reserve fund in the hands of its members, accustoming them, though less powerfully, to the idea of common life, and training them in the practical conduct of affairs. That remarkable creation of the latter half of the nineteenth century, a working-class civil service, is almost as much the work of the Co-operators as of the Unionists. Two great forces were brought into being to play their parts in the life of the nation, and those not necessarily the narrow ones designed by many of their founders. Strength gives opportunity; and it was certain that, so soon as their unions had become strong enough, and the conditions around them permitted, the British Trade Unions would use their strength for purposes never contemplated by Allan and Newton, in the days of their weakness.

In dealing with mediæval Socialism in England,

I divided it into two classes—theoretic and organic. The first half of the nineteenth century in England was concerned chiefly with theoretic Socialism; the chief work of the second was the creation of a new organic life, which, if not theoretically Socialist, was at least a protest against the theoretic individualism of the day. In the earlier time, all over the country, men were aspiring to found one gigantic union of all the manual workers, large enough to bring industry to a standstill, and inaugurate a new era when Labour should be king, but there were no adequate means for such an end. A later generation, while, for a time, it narrowed the aspirations of Labour, vastly improved its organisation and multiplied its resources. The great Unions of 1907 are to the loosely organised movements of Owen's day as a European State to the fleeting dynasties of the Tartar Steppes.

It is equally easy to over- or under-estimate the difficulty of socialising such a mass as the proletariat of 1850. On the one hand, the enthusiast may call, with Shelley, for the workers to take immediate control of their own destinies, to

> Rise like lions after slumber
> In unvanquishable number!
> Shake your chains to earth, like dew
> Which in sleep had fall'n on you:
> Ye are many—they are few.

The problem of democracy, seen in this way, seems but one of the unbinding of Prometheus; if only the workers would make an effort, they would be free, and the new world would dawn at once. Unfortunately, the real problem of Socialism is one of con-

struction; a mob can destroy, but only a highly organised, in fact, a *socialised* people can carry on any system more democratic than the present. The ignorant peasants and unorganised factory hands of Shelley's day were incapable of this, and a revolution would most likely only have handed the people over to a new set of masters.

On the other hand, if we look at the complexity of the change, it is easy to exaggerate the time required to organise a people. Given favourable conditions, the process is nothing like so lengthy as may be supposed, only we must remember that it *is* a process, not a catastrophe. You can no more make a mob into a democracy without training than you can make a clever boy into a mechanic without apprenticeship. Each has to learn, however rapidly, the true trick of the tools, and the tools of a great civilisation are infinitely more complex than those of any trade. Only, in the case of a nation, if the organisation is infinitely more complex, so are the means of learning. The process of training a democracy goes on in, not one, but many ways. Not only, valuable as it is, by the work of the agitator, but in countless unseen ways, aided by unknown and unconscious or partly conscious workers, a nation shapes itself for Socialism. "As the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child," the unseen work of one generation may bring to birth a new nation, utterly different in outlook and possibilities from that which preceded it.

What is wanted is a change in the normal life of the average man which shall impress upon him

the *habit* of association. There is the Socialist of theory, who sees clearly the outline of the new State, but whose habits, however much he may hate them, are inevitably formed by the environment in which he is brought up. At every turn, he is liable to do the most individualistic things, even in attempting to bring about the destruction of individualism. Custom is ever more powerful than opinion; and while a far-seeing man may perceive the advantages of common action, it is only he who has unconsciously become accustomed to co-operation who will in all emergencies instinctively adopt it. A man may drown in spite of the most perfect theoretic knowledge of the art of swimming, where the savage, who has been accustomed to the water, will come safely to shore. It was just these "tricks of the tools" that the Trade Unionists of the latter half of the nineteenth century learnt; it is just the fact that modern Socialism appeals to an educated democracy, and not to a mob, that makes it so vastly more formidable than that of Owen and Maurice.

It is all very well to say that the people should control industry and own the means of production; but the carrying out of so great a change demands the creation of an entirely new way of looking at life, and the settling, in some way or other, of countless details utterly beyond the power of any man or group of men to think out. "The laws of England" are bulky enough in the eyes of the legal expert; but all common, statute, and judge-made laws of which he takes cognisance are together but the barest abstract of the vast complication of

customs, laws, and regulations which govern the forty millions of people in these islands. Every institution, voluntary or compulsory, every factory, village, shop, or farm, every association of men, for however trivial a purpose, has to arrive at its method of common consent, written or unwritten. Every rule, formally drafted, has to be interpreted in practice, to be modified until it will fit smoothly into its groove in the wilderness of things among which it has to function. The constant movement of social life is bringing daily to the front a world of matters, little or big, needing the informal legislation of common sense. When any new thing needs to be done, it quite as often as not matters very little in which of various possible ways we agree to do it, only we must come to a common agreement of some sort. Understanding law in its broadest sense, the nation is always giving occasion for new laws, and always legislating much more rapidly and effectively, though perhaps with less eloquence, than that section of it which meets at Westminster.

The whole nation may thus be regarded as a vast legislative assembly, settling in continual session all imaginable questions, great or little, in the order in which they are presented to it by the life-history of the nation itself. The ceaseless tide of English speech is its infinite debate; the English nation in ceaseless action is its executive. By the cumulative effect of countless millions of detail adjustments, the mind of the nation becomes steadily modified from generation to generation; while the modification

of the national spirit determines, in its turn, how the detail adjustments of the future shall be made. The progress of Socialism in England is very imperfectly understood by him who regards only that part of it which is recorded in the press or discussed on the platform. As in the world of external nature, so in that of man, new things are ever coming to the birth which render useless the most brilliant sociologies constructed before their appearance.

Nevertheless one or two simple principles remain clear, and afford threads by means of which we may guide ourselves in thought through the maze of things. Given the chance to achieve a common purpose co-operatively, men will do it that way instead of by competition. Economists, looking only at the work of traders, have expressed this in the maxim, " Where combination is possible, competition is impossible." The central purpose of society itself is the substitution of co-operation for the brutal competition of the struggle for existence; and social history may be regarded as a, possibly endless, progress towards the distant goal of universal co-operation for all common purposes, for international Socialism.

But again, as in external nature, so in society, the rate of this progress varies continually. During a northern winter, when lake and river are bound with frost, the seeds of life in the waters sleep; with the returning sun, the progress of life goes on continually. The seeds of vegetable and animal life begin to germinate and grow. Each individual organism pursues its own ends, conscious only of

the pressure, utterly regardless of the purposes of its surrounding organisms, until the shallows swarm with a tangled network of life. Seen under the miscroscope, every drop of water will be evidence of the forces germinating everywhere. No single organism, no individual type even, will be of much consequence; but the cumulative effect of a few weeks' growth will entirely change the character of the whole.

So it was in the England of the later nineteenth century. With the fall in the price of bread, the humanitarian legislation promoted by Ashley, and the reform of Trade Union law, the long suppressed spirit of combination among the English working people was released. At the moment, no doubt, the inspiration given by Owen and others was of importance in starting the progress that ensued; but, for a generation, the workers became too busy in the practical constructive work of the moment to listen to aspirations after a distant future. The watchword of Trade Unionist and Co-operator alike became, "No Politics within the Society"; but when at last the preliminary work was done, the first important step in the creation of British Socialism had been taken, and three million English men and women had left individualism behind for ever.

PART II

THE LATER MOVEMENT

CHAPTER I

THE REVIVAL

WHILE England had, as described in the last chapter, been silently developing a new organic, she had been taking less and less interest in theoretic Socialism. But the same was by no means true in other lands. During the earlier years of the century, we hear little of Socialism anywhere, except in England and France. The era of Trade Unionism in the one country and the Second Empire in the other, saw a change. Gradually the centre of interest shifted to Germany, in which land the Socialist idea made, for long, most progress, and where Socialism was armed with intellectual and political weapons fitted to the needs of the age.

It is not here necessary to give any account of German Socialism; a general idea of the new features it introduced into the international, or rather, for our purpose, into the English movement, will suffice. The older Socialists in this country did little or nothing to give their faith a place in the intellectual movement of the day. Owen understood thoroughly, from his own experience, the workings of the new factory system, to the study of which he brought a fine humanitarian spirit and some natural faculty for philosophic thought. But he made no pretension to

be a learned man, while he does not appear to have been particularly well informed on current economic theory and political science generally. What he brought to the discussion of the subject was the experience of a successful business man, combined with a rare faculty of seeing outside his own personal and class interests. Maurice, the leader of the Christian Socialists, approached the matter from another point of view—that of theology. To him, co-operation and brotherhood were the divine order of society, which it was the duty of the Christian to endeavour to establish. One of the ablest minds of his age, his writings have had a far wider influence than could be guessed from their scanty popularity, and there can be no doubt his life was a valuable asset to the cause. But neither was Maurice an economist, and, unlike Owen, he had singularly little acquaintance with the factory system, then rapidly becoming the typical form of industry. The productive societies founded by the Christian Socialists were all among trades which had hitherto been but little affected by the invention of machinery; their originators showed a very inadequate idea of the revolution then in process over industry itself. It would be easy to pass a similar judgment on the earlier French Socialism. Probably Owen was, up to the commencement of the Victorian Era, the most modern Socialist in the world. The German Socialists approached the question in a different spirit. They saw clearly that Socialism must have its place in modern philosophy, and be defended by men having an adequate acquaintance with

economics and modern science. Whatever may be said of Marx's value theory, there can be no doubt whatever that his book was of immense service to the intellectual prestige of Socialism, a service of which the purely economic auguments give a very inadequate idea. As Maurice, by identifying Socialism with the ethics of Christianity, compelled the Church to consider the subject seriously, so Rodbertus and Marx compelled the attention of the economists. To Marx the philosophic historian owes much; while even those Socialists who most dissent from some of his theories must admit the intellectual inspiration his work gave to the whole movement.

During the years when the conscious movement lay quiescent in England, Socialism in Germany gained a place in philosophy and science, it became "armed with all the knowledge of the time." But the Germans did more than this. They determined what should be, in the modern European state, the method of militant Socialism. The earlier English Socialists attached comparatively little value to politics; they allowed even more than its due importance to voluntary association, and but little to State action. This should not be allowed by the modern Socialist to throw doubt on their orthodoxy—the aim of Socialism is to secure co-operation based on the common ownership of land and capital, and the particular manner in which this is attained, by State or voluntary action, or by both combined, is, however important, a matter of machinery, not of principle.

German Social Democracy was an immense advance, not in the Socialist conception of life, but

in the application of that conception to modern conditions. It was this intellectually, and, perhaps even to a greater extent, politically. To Lassalle, even more than to Marx, modern Socialists are deeply indebted; Marx set the world of culture thinking and arguing, Lassalle set the people organising. The "Universal German Labourers' Union," founded by Lassalle in 1863 to advocate Labour representation and universal suffrage, has developed into the strongest of all Socialist organisations, the German Social Democratic Party. Perhaps we may date from its formation the origin of the modern political Socialist movement.

Conscious Socialism returned to England as Social Democracy—a militant political force, armed with powerful intellectual weapons forged in Germany. These things imposed on the revived movement from the first an entirely new spirit and method. The older Socialists, as a rule, were much inclined to let governments alone, except to press from outside for this or that factory reform. They tried to inspire individuals and groups with the spirit of brotherhood, and to induce them to organise on a small scale in order to realise their ideal. At the time they lived, the working men had no votes, and a worker's political party was impossible till after the extension of the franchise. Nor did they, with notable exceptions, take much active part in the Chartist agitation, just as too many of their modern successors take all too little interest in the movement for the enfranchisement of women. When Socialism returned to England again, however, household suffrage in

the towns was already an accomplished fact; and only a few years were to elapse ere it was to be granted in the counties. There was, therefore, the material for a worker's party; there was available to their hand a far wider study of the modern conditions of the problem; while there was, in most cases, a frank recognition of the fact that the "*bourgeois* parties" could not be induced to do anything of importance for Socialism.

The gain, as a whole, was enormous; it would have been even greater had the leaders of the revived movement understood more clearly the character of the environment in which English Socialism would have from henceforth to grow. Unfortunately, this was not the case. In Germany, Socialism had not only learnt how to deal with those industrial and political conditions common to all Western nations; it had also been shaped and fitted to a definite harmony with German thought and German method. The members of the Social Democratic Federation seem never to have succeeded in separating mentally the essentials from the accidentals of German Socialism. The economic and philosophic conclusions of Karl Marx, only comprehensible to anyone after careful study, and then, like all such conclusions, highly disputable, have been by them elevated into a position of authority equal or superior to those primary ethical perceptions, on which, in all probability, even their own faith is in reality based. Though it is the duty of every Socialist to use every means to acquaint himself with the best

thought of the age, it is still true that Socialism is primarily of the heart, and only secondarily of the head. The Socialist perceives that "the war of individual against individual" is wrong, and that fraternity is right. He resents the appropriation of the means by which the many must live in order to keep the few in luxury, because it is fundamentally impossible to him to feel in any other way about such a thing. He does not need the Hegelian dialectic to teach him that it is infamous to employ a woman making shirts at sevenpence a dozen, any more than he requires similar assistance to persuade him that it is wrong to commit a personal assault upon her.

A clear perception of the distinction between the essential things of Socialism, which can be revealed unto babes, and the helpful analysis of life which it is the duty of the wise and prudent to work out in order to guide humanity in the application of Socialist principles to any given age, is the surest safeguard against that form of intellectual pride which is the besetting sin of the educated Socialist. The idea of human brotherhood is a primary one, and forms the fundamental basis of Socialist aspiration in every place and time; as economic theorists, Socialists are no more infallible than their opponents. Industrial and political conditions change from age to age, and even the most perfect economic argument may be rendered valueless at any moment by the appearance of a new fact.

The method of Socialism thus requires ceaseless modification from time to time, and the conclusions

of Socialists in any one land equally require modification when imported into another. If the Socialist literature of Germany be a true reflection of the national spirit, all that can be said is that the German people are vastly more fond of philosophic speculations than the British working man. The latter, to put it bluntly, has no theory of the State, no philosophy of history whatever; and it is safe to conclude that, if he cannot work his way into Socialism by the method of practical experiment in the betterment of his own life, he will never get there.

Now the character of a people, the national spirit, are things with which it is vain for the politician to argue; they must be accepted as the good artist accepts the qualities and limitations of the material in which he has to work. The Socialism of one nation, imported into another, has to be treated like its literature. If I may use the metaphor, it must be translated into the dialect of the people; it must be shaped into harmony with their general habit of thought. British Socialists received from Germany two invaluable things, each necessary to the warfare with modern capitalism—the idea of the careful and scientific study of modern conditions, and that of independent political organisation. Unfortunately, they were slow to recognise either the necessity of making a fresh and independent study of contemporary British industrial society as thorough as that of Marx, or that the Socialist party in Britain must be constructed on British lines.

In reality, Socialism had returned in modern guise to a country everywhere full of promise, though nowhere of the kind of promise the new Socialists sought. The Marxian ideal was a "class conscious" party, gradually increasing in numbers until it embraced all the proletariat in one definite revolutionary organisation. Up to the time of its final victory over all opponents, till the day of the Social Revolution, the condition of the people was, according to programme, to wax worse and worse, until at last the misery of the workers became too great for endurance. Then would come the day of retribution, and Socialism would be established at once and for ever. Such were the expectations of most Socialists in the early eighties; and, though it has stooped to a somewhat inconsistent programme of palliatives, such is virtually the ideal of the Social Democratic Federation to-day. The Socialists had a not unreasonable confidence that, as soon as the people heard a propaganda by the success of which they stood to gain so much, they would promptly rally round it. The Social Revolution was expected almost immediately. Satan might have great wrath, knowing that his time was short; but the millennium could hardly be delayed till the close of the nineteenth century; on the whole, the centenary of the French Revolution seemed the most appropriate date. After all, the revolutionists were Englishmen, and fellow-countrymen of Dr. Cummings and Mr. Baxter, though inspired by the Apocalypse of Karl Marx, not by that of St. John.

It is a fault of "class conscious" Socialism that it tends to overlook or undervalue the unconscious evolutionary Socialism around it. The founders of the Social Democratic Federation had, as we know, not to deal with a mass of men similar to an equal number of Germans or Frenchmen, but with a definite national organism, essentially different from either, with a marked and long-established national character and habits of action. Since the time of the earlier Socialist missionaries, a new, essentially socialistic, world had come into existence, a world to which the words "Individualism" and "Socialism" were alike meaningless abstractions. But this world was built up throughout on the mutual dependence of man on man, on the free association of equals. It had developed for itself a new educated class, men trained in modern industrial conditions, who functioned as the expert servants, not as the masters, of the community. It had gradually accumulated funds amounting to many millions, which only required proper direction to afford a lever for the conquest of political power. "The British nation," it is said, conquered an empire "in a fit of absence of mind"; and in a similar absence of mind the British proletariat, striving after minute improvements in their immediate industrial circumstances, had forged an adequate lever for their own emancipation.

But, unfortunately, the organised Trades and the Co-operative Societies were sadly ignorant of Marxian theories; they were far from being the "class conscious proletariat" that they should have

been. Nor were early attempts to convert them very successful. Street corner meetings, attended by enthusiastic groups of Socialists, were rarely attended by anyone else. A few working men were captured here and there, but even they showed an unhappy tendency to slide away, and became immersed in some detail business of Trade Unionism ; or even, if elected on to the London County Council, to neglect their magnificent opportunities for advertising the cause, and devote themselves to some pettifogging business of trams or gas. The Trade Unions did not resist the Socialists, for they hardly took the trouble to know that such people existed. The whole world of organic Socialism in England, so hopeful in appearance, remained obstinately devoted to its own immediate concerns.

It was all a severe trial of temper to men filled with a fiery enthusiasm, and it is not perhaps wonderful that the early Socialists soon became disgusted with Trade Unionism. An early pamphlet, entitled *To Hell with Trade Unionism*, was for long thrown up against the Socialists by Liberal Trade Unionists everywhere. Yet the view of the revolutionary Socialist who wrote it, that Trade Unionism prevented the people from organising for anything better, was natural enough, and contained, indeed, an important half truth. The working-class world, engaged for a generation in practical work, had indeed lost touch with the ideal, which the Trade Union leaders of that age have never recaptured. Practically all the active Trade Union leaders who have joined the Socialist movement

are yet under, most of them a good deal under, sixty. Organic Socialism, indeed, progresses in quite a different manner from conscious Socialism. Men come together and form great organisations at the bidding of immediate practical interests which they have in common. Frequently the most powerful societies are founded by men who have no intention of forming a permanent organisation at all, but merely unite for some interest of the moment. An organisation once founded, however, can hardly confine its operations to those intended by its first founders; and bit by bit, as it advances, organic Socialism is compelled to develop in all manner of ways never contemplated at first. In such a society, the ideal may be long in appearing; and the very end for which it ought, according to idealists, to have been formed, might even perhaps be attained "in a fit of absence of mind," without any of the members realising what they had collectively done.

Successful practical work tends to dim the ideal vision—that is the reason why the young dreamer so often becomes the middle-aged Philistine—and successful organising work had rendered the Trade Unionists of the later nineteenth century less apt than their forefathers to listen to Socialist enthusiams. The work of permeating the nation had become more difficult, instead of easier, by time. But the thing was still possible, and, once done, would be far more effective than before. These practical, unromantic organisations, whose want of enthusiasm was so irritating to the Socialists of the eighties, had provided a lever with which to move the

modern world. However difficult the task, it was the business of the Socialists to educate the organisations, not to quarrel with them.

Nor were the Socialists much more alive to the value of the various streamlets of Socialistic thought that had come down from earlier days, or were gushing up to the surface of middle-class society at the time. Carlyle had acted as an inspiration to Kingsley and his friends, and indeed to almost every serious-minded young man in Early Victorian days. In the eighties, it was Ruskin who was shaping the studious minds of men and women alike. This difference is significant, both of the times and of the men. Neither prophet had what I may call an organic mind, or any very clear, constructive ideal. Both worked by means of direct moral appeal, both were more or less hysterical in their denunciations of evil, both apt to be contemptuous of things they did not understand. But Ruskin's outlook on life was far wider than Carlyle's. and the things he understood far more numerous, The facts, that he made his appeals as much to women as to men, and that he has been the means of inspiring active, social enthusiasm in thousands of women, are evidences of this, and show, not only the wider outlook of the man, but of the age. The new generation laughed at Ruskin's vehemence and was puzzled by his contradictions, but nevertheless the new generation listened. The intelligent young men and women of the day, after all, saw life very much as Ruskin saw it. The fathers had been well content with the old Liberal view, which

approved of the destiny of England as "the workshop of the world," but they themselves were not disposed to be satisfied with this ideal. When the successful cotton manufacturer, reared in the atmosphere of Individualism, sent his son to Oxford and his daughter to Girton, he struck a blow at everything he had been taught to hold sacred. If, as was very probable, they returned mere snobs, the remainder of his life would be a miserable attempt to feel at home with his offspring and their friends, but no very great harm would be done outside the family circle. If, however, they seriously cared for culture, they would certainly come in contact with all sorts of ideas that would leave them hardly a thought in common with people of the older order. They would come to regard the ideal of the class from which they had sprung as the most dreary and impossible one ever accepted by human beings, and the practical results of British commercial enterprise as a mere nightmare of ugliness and barbarism.

In fact, Ruskin's outcries were only exaggerations of what all who were touched by the revived love of art and beauty he had done so much to bring about were feeling. The times spirit was playing the same tune on many souls, only the nervous organism of Ruskin was a more delicate instrument than most. Many were being driven by a hatred of the ugliness of capitalistic civilisation to an equally vehement hatred of its cruelty. Twenty years ago, most Socialist lecturers had at least one discourse on "John Ruskin" or "Unto this Last,"

while there was much Ruskin talk among the groups of young Socialists.

There was, indeed, a good deal of "sentimental Socialism," as the orthodox called it, current at the time. Drawing-room meetings for the discussion of social questions were not uncommon, and "slumming" was a fashionable amusement. The social enthusiasm of the Church was reviving, and had already resulted in the formation of the Guild of St. Matthew, the oldest existing Socialist organisation in England. The new cult of beauty, which produced the æsthetic movement, was taking a social turn; and was endeavouring, in the Kyrle Society, to "bring beauty home to the people." Lastly, English and American Radicalism were giving, perhaps, their last important contribution to politics, in the growing movement for land nationalisation. In the main, the arguments of the land reformers were based on the current individualistic way of looking at life; but certainly public land ownership is not individualism, and the land controversy tended to make the conception of the State as nothing more than a glorified policeman obsolete. Altogether, had the Socialists been prepared to be tolerant, there were many active forces in society with which they could co-operate. Unfortunately, many of their leaders met all sympathisers with a demand that they should swallow the Marxian theory of value, the class war, and the catastrophic Social Revolution. The practical Trade Unionists and sentimental Socialists of a nation that is often practical and generally senti-

mental, but never philosophical, generally refused to do anything of the kind; and for several years the Socialist movement existed indeed, but exercised about as much influence on English life as a college debating society.

CHAPTER II

CONSCIOUS SOCIALISM IN THE EIGHTIES

WITH the formation of the Democratic, soon to be converted into the Social Democratic, Federation, the Socialist movement, properly so called, was revived in England; but it revived in essentially a new spirit. As a criticism of life, it had become more complete, and the men and women who were first converted to it displayed a far wider range of thought and interest, than their predecessors. That women like Mrs. Besant were prominent in the movement is itself a mark of advance; while the collection of foreign revolutionaries, Radical parsons, artists, journalists, and people of the most varied experience of life, guaranteed at least that everything human would ultimately find its place in English Socialism. It was Bohemia turned serious, under the inspiration of an idea. Every institution of society was subjected to a fiery ordeal of criticism, by beaurocrat or Communist, atheist and Christian Socialist. The note of a grim Marxian orthodoxy, perhaps, sounded loud above the orchestra; but revolutionist and temporiser were alike present, advocating everything, from the barricades to a mild permeation of the Liberal party. To evolve from all this a form of Socialism that could

commend itself to the staid genius of the English people, especially as many of the enthusiasts seemed more pleased to shock than to convert the Philistines, may not have been easy; but, looking back upon the time, one would not have had it otherwise. The Socialism of England must be compounded of many simples; and there are few of the varied aspects of its first manifestation that, clarified by time and experience, have failed to obtain a permanent place in the movement.

On the face of it, the position of affairs could not look very favourable to the enthusiastic Socialists of the early eighties. There was hardly ever a time when the conscious Socialists of the country were relatively fewer or less influential. During the generation in which the purely individualistic structure of British industrialism had, steadily though slowly, given way to an elaborate, if imperfect organisation, so silent had been the voice of conscious Socialism, that a singular superstition had grown up. The belief that Socialism was essentially un-English had become prevalent, and continued, indeed, until the Labour successes of 1906. Then came the revulsion, which has revealed itself in the present Tory panic, and the attempt to convict the Socialist by means of the gramophone. Economists, and, to some extent, Social philosophers generally, indeed, had been gradually shifting their point of view to accord with the accomplished facts around them. The "wages fund" theory had been abandoned, nominally at least, to argument; in reality, we may suspect, to square with the

admitted successes of Trade Unionism. *Laissez faire* was still a theory very popular in the press; but *laissez faire* had become so hedged about with practical exceptions, that it was no longer a theory having any real relation to actual politics. Adulteration and Factory Acts, measures to secure tenant right in Ulster, Employers' Liability and Truck Acts, combined to give an air of unreality to utterances that still commanded a conventional respect from a nation that was continually disobeying them. Yet the individualist conception of life was everywhere accepted, in so far as any conception was accepted at all. Socialism as an ideal was confined to a group of London enthusiasts, and an unknowable sprinkling of believers, scattered here and there about the country.

Yet, for all that, there was a great deal to encourage anyone, but the bigot who wished to do everything his own way. As we have seen, there were innumerable forces, sentimental and practical, in the new England, which only required to be combined and organised to create a national party of the first magnitude. That, even now, the work of doing this is only begun is no serious reflection on the insight of those who started the movement; it is a proof of one of the most important contentions of the Socialist, the influence of environment.

It would be well here to work out a little more closely the immediate problem facing the Socialists of that day, the translation of their gospel into the dialect of English thought. Political Socialism in England could not, of course, escape the destiny

of all things living, biological and sociological. Whatever its inner spirit, it must, if it was to survive, evolve a method and an organisation fitted to its environment. As the mammal whose home is in the sea, must, while still remaining a mammal, take the form of a fish, so political Socialism, originating in Germany, must, in England, conform itself to the conditions of English thought and feeling. The influence of social environment on organisations, ideas, and individuals is the greatest of all practical reasons for attaching value to an improved form of society. If it were common for people bred in slums to develop into saints or philosophers, or for youths born "with silver spoons in their mouths" to devote themselves to useful and strenuous work, the Socialist would hardly be justified in seeking to alter a system which produced such admirable results. The development of character being the end of life, any evils, however apparently great, in the social order, which do not check the development of character, must be reckoned as of relatively little importance, perhaps only as disguised blessings. The facts, that people who have the opportunity to live as dignified social parasites generally avail themselves of the privilege, and that those who cannot live at all except by prostitution and thievery are apt to prefer those methods of life to starvation, are the main justifications of the Socialist movement. The brutality of the slum, the uselessness of Mayfair, are the final condemnation of both.

But not only do the vices of a social order

impress themselves on all within; so do, and with almost greater force, its harmless peculiarities. As the language and accent of a man reveal the nation or district from which he comes, and are made for him by his life and surroundings, so also do his ways of looking at and doing things. As the feudalism and capitalism of France and Germany differed from one another and from those of England, so, it is safe to say, will their Socialism also. The fundamental character of each people will persist under all forms. Whether he meant it as a jest or not, Mr. Bernard Shaw did a profoundly true thing when he invested Julius Cæsar's British slave with the character of one of our modern Puritans. From the soil of Latium arose, in ancient times, the temporal Imperialism of the Cæsars; in later days, the spiritual despotism of the Popes. The same political capacity, animated by the same spirit, was the cause of both. The art-loving cities of Etruria give place to the beautiful free cities of mediæval Tuscany; and Sicily gives, in ancient and mediæval times alike, a favourable battle-ground for the ideals of East and West, for Phœnician and Roman, for Saracen and Norman. There is no altering these things. The fundamental character of a people is the growth of thousands of recorded and unrecorded years; and however much common circumstances may impose on all the necessity for a common purpose, its particular method of applying that purpose must be evolved by each nation for itself.

Now the deep-rooted character of English politics, the thing that has broken the hearts of generations of idealists here, is an essential Whiggishness, a spirit of compromise, that prevents us, as a nation, ever doing anything the way its advocates want us to do it. British politics are politics of experiment, very largely, in all ages, the politics of rule of thumb. Before this general spirit, the *doctrinaire* breaks down hopelessly; for though he may sometimes get the nation to pay lip-service to his teaching, the old habit of compromise always asserts itself in practice; and just at the moment the *doctrinaire* fancies he has won the battle for good, the nation does something or other that shows it has never paid the least attention to his theories. The most dramatic instance of this was the defeat of the *laissez faire* free traders, in the very hour almost of their apparent victory, over the Factory Acts. If ever a political doctrine seemed likely to become permanently accepted in England, it was that of administrative nihilism, in the middle of last century. Political philosophies were built up upon it; lecturers and leader-writers took it for their text; it cannot be denied that legislation was profoundly affected by it. And yet, in the very hour of its triumph, the nation, without advancing any alternative theory whatever in place of it, began a perfect network of legislation on all sorts of subjects, in complete defiance of the accepted creed. Parliaments, then as ever, obeyed the pressure of facts and interests, rather than of doctrines. The journalist who one day

wrote with apparent conviction of the policy of letting things alone, would advocate with equal earnestness a scheme of compulsory education the next. Professor Fawcett, who proved, to his own satisfaction, that as little as possible should be done by the State, became famous among Post-masters-General by making his department do as much useful work as he possibly could. In vain did Herbert Spencer protest against the "new Toryism." It was nothing of the kind: it was the permanent, practical English spirit obeying the pressure of facts and not of doctrines. As, in apparent obedience to individualistic theory, but essentially because old institutions actually were hampering their progress, the English people had broken down the structures of the past, so, without the aid of any particular theory at all, they commenced to build up new social structures for the future.

Individualist or Socialist, armed with the theories of Karl Marx or the late Mr. Auberon Herbert, the English idealist finds this atmosphere of Whiggery surrounding him like the fogs of his native island. Everyone about him is moving, not straight to some distant, though clearly seen, goal, but by feeling his way from one immediate and tangible object to another. "We shall blunder through somehow" has become the classic phrase for our hope of victory in war; it would be equally suitable as applied to our method of doing everything else. No doubt it is all very stupid and very exasperating, but it is no use quarrelling with facts. Only the bad workman

lays the blame on his tools or his material; and to shape English life into Socialism, we must accept the limitations of our material, and work accordingly; we must conquer nature by obeying her. The two cardinal forces of English life are the practical and the sentimental. In no nation in the world, perhaps, do a larger number of men and women live and die without any definite religious or political theory of life whatever; in none do passing waves of humanitarian sentiment count for more. Englishmen conduct their lives, for the most part, by a sort of materialistic rule of thumb, co-operating or competing as seems most convenient for the moment, not in obedience to any particular belief either in co-operation or competition. At intervals, some revelation of practical oppression touches the feelings of the nation, and we insist on "something being done" to remedy the particular evil. In this way, in something of the spirit of our religious "revivals," and not in obedience to any coherent doctrine of politics, the nation ended black slavery in the West Indies, limited white slavery in the cotton mills, and insisted on every British ship bearing its Plimsoll lines; though probably in each case the logical statement of the opponent's case was far truer to accepted ideas than that of the advocates of the measure.

Now, Socialism is gaining ground, and is, I believe, destined to attain a virtual, if not a theoretically perfect, victory in England, because it is essentially in harmony with both these forces. The work of the conscious Socialist is to guide and inspire both,

not to quarrel with either, in any event, to understand them. He has to assist the gradual growth of co-operative methods, whenever and wherever they show themselves; and to develop the rather gusty and erratic sentimentalism, which, from time to time, rouses the average Englishman against some particular oppression, into a steady faith in fraternity and equality everywhere and towards all men. The more he is filled with that deep respect and love for the common people, without which all criticism of their limitations often is and always ought to be resented as an impertinence, the better he will be fitted to do this. The fewer theories for or against the merits of the national State as an institution he holds, the more fitted he will be to welcome any and every advance, made either by the centralised State itself, by the local governing body, by the Trade Union, the Co-operative Store, or societies like the Housing Reform Association, to build up the complex life of the Co-operative Commonwealth. *Doctrinaire* opposition to the State like that of Prince Kropotkin, *doctrinaire* glorification of the State like that of the late Mr. Bellamy, are equally foreign to the national spirit. Jerusalem is a city that is at unity with itself, in which *all* the functions and *all* the organisations of society are inspired and controlled by the same spirit of equality and brotherhood. The steady pressure of practical conditions is now forcing people into syndicates and trusts, into Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies, is making an industrial cosmos of the chaos of nineteenth-century competition. At the same time,

the spread of education and the general growth of racial self-consciousness among humanity are developing a crude social conscience. Both these tendencies unite to give an excellent basis for the Socialist. Unfortunately he has been too often inclined to quarrel with his luck instead of striving to find out the best way to use it.

The Socialists of the eighties, then, came into the English world with a doctrine of co-operation and fellowship of which the nation stood in sore need, and a set of Marxian formularies which it would not have at any price. Unfortunately, they pushed their Marxianism almost more than the Socialism of which it was only one imperfect expression. The history of the first ten years or so of the revived movement is one of adjustment. Until the Socialists had evolved a method and an instrument suited to the nation, political Socialism could make no headway in England. It was only with the advent of the Independent Labour Party, a body charged with the same authentic fire as older organisations, that Socialism gained a hold on the electorate. From that day, it has grown steadily stronger, till it has become a powerful factor in current politics.

The Social Democratic Federation was founded in 1884, and for several years worked in obscurity, as far as the people were concerned. Containing, or soon attaching to itself, many very clever men and women, it cannot, I fear, be said that the Federation has ever long retained the services of any original mind, or managed to incorporate any new creative conception into its work and policy.

On the other hand, it has been the means in numbers of cases of bringing Socialism to the notice of thoughtful people, capable of rising to some extent out of the general level of English thought. Many of these converts of the Federation have been instrumental in the needful work of shaping Socialism into something more in keeping with English ideas. The first and greatest of these men was William Morris. On the other hand, the short-lived Socialist League, the Fabian Society, and the Independent Labour Party, all owe much to the inspiration of the older organisation. Leaving the latter for fuller treatment later on, it will be well to examine, first of all, the state of things which resulted in the formation of the two former.

William Morris was the greatest personality that has ever been connected with Socialism in England, or perhaps in the modern world. He was this by virtue of the essentially creative quality of his mind. It was not in the nature of Morris to touch anything, from wall-hangings to Socialism, without transforming it into something after his own image. But his mind was essentially that of an artist, not of a philosopher or a politician at all. The whole *doctrinaire* side of current Socialism was utterly alien to him. He hated competitive capitalism, just as he hated the "restorers" of Gothic, because it degraded and vulgarised everything it touched, not because he had any philosophy of the State, or any special economic theory to advance against it. He was an out-

and-out Communist because of the essential sanity of a mind incapable of the desire to monopolise anything he could not use. As long as they have food and shelter, and free access to material things on which to exercise their abundant creative energy, men like Morris rise altogether above all arguments about property, earned or unearned. The desire to appropriate anything not really needed to their own exclusive use, by however good a right they might be able to substantiate it, is a feeling about which they care nothing, and perhaps cannot readily understand how anyone else does. Morris's conception of Socialism was that of a free society, based simply on the equal rights of all to use the earth and anything in it, and the consequent abolition of all competition for the means of life. This conception was perhaps as effective a solvent of the nascent conventions of many of his fellow-Socialists as their own theories were to those of the world around them.

Morris brought to the Socialist movement a whole stream of ideas with which it had hitherto had little contact. As Maurice and Kingsley form a connecting link between Owenite Socialism and the Church, so through the teaching of Morris, and to a lesser degree of Ruskin, Socialism came in touch with the world of art. Another force, equally opposed to capitalism, though hitherto for very different reasons, was now revealed to the Socialists. The middle classes, made wealthy by machinery, were beginning to find out that for all purposes of beauty, the work of the machine was far inferior

to that of the hand. Joined to this was a feeling of disgust at the sacrifices of natural beauty, daily demanded by advancing capitalism. Such institutions as the Kyrle, and Commons Preservation Societies, and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, founded about this time, showed that the middle classes were beginning to realise the communal value of beauty in art and nature; and if not at war with capitalism as such, were at least becoming restive at some of its manifestations.

But the Socialism of "*News from Nowhere*" was almost as different a thing from that of Marx or of the popular Edward Bellamy as either of these were from commercialism. Exaggerated as might be the revolt against machinery, it was badly wanted as a protest at the time. Morris did much to save English Socialism from two grave dangers: that of becoming a purely philistine and mechanical conception of politics, and that of depending definitely upon the future progress of modern industrialism continuing on the same lines as it has followed during the last century and a half.

Morris, though he was a man naturally much more given to creative work than controversy, seems thus to have become the stormy petrel of the Socialist movement. He came at once in conflict with those who were eager to take immediate part in active politics. How little fitted the movement was to do anything of the sort may be judged by the absurd results of the candidatures run by

the Federation at the election of 1885. But Morris did not believe in politics, and was far more closely allied in sympathy with the Anarchist-Communist groups than with the State Socialists. The greatness of his personality perhaps had more to do with the matter than anything else; but he seems to have carried the majority of the Federation with him. Wisely, perhaps, he did not press his victory. Morris left the Federation and founded the definitely revolutionary Socialist League.

The League was primarily a protest against Marxianism and politics in the Socialist movement, but it also expressed, to some extent, the contribution of the artistic spirit to English Socialism. In so far as the League, and the Hammersmith Socialist Society, which survived it so long as Morris himself lived, exerted any permanent influence on the movement, it was chiefly to enrich it by the addition of an æsthetic, as well as an ethical and economic, criticism of present-day conditions. I doubt, however, whether the League was really very serviceable, even in this way; for, so far as the relations of art and Socialism are really understood any better now than they used to be twenty years ago, I attribute this far more to the personalities of Morris himself and Mr. Walter Crane than to any organisation. In so far, however, as the League may, during its short life, have actually brought young Socialists into touch with the spirit of the master, it must certainly have done good service to the movement. The artistic

influence has broadened the Socialist conception of life wherever it has really been felt, and has fitted the movement to meet a very probable future industrial development, never anticipated by the purely economic Socialists. From the influence of Morris, possibly from that of the League, Socialism gained in adaptability, became less *doctrinaire* and more human.

With the "probable future development" of industry above mentioned I shall deal later on, in a chapter on Socialism and Machinery; for the present it is only necessary to say that the League may have helped to prepare English Socialism to deal, not only with an industrialism developing as per Marxian programme, but with a probable, though then unanticipated, change in the course of progress. But for this, however, and a few years' vigorous propaganda as far north as Scotland, which probably paved the way for future developments of Socialism, the League did little. Mr. Bruce Glasier, the editor of the *Labour Leader*, is perhaps the most prominent personality in the practical movement of to-day who was connected with it. It is pretty certain, however, that the average Englishman was quite unable to understand either the Federation or the League, much less the reason of the split or the differences between them. Neither organisation had learnt to speak to England in a language understood by the people.

CHAPTER III

CONSCIOUS SOCIALISM IN THE EIGHTIES—II

THE Socialist League, though it may have aided in bringing the movement into touch with contemporary artistic feeling, had not, to any extent, aided in the necessary work of weaving Socialism into the general scheme of English life. It had done nothing to give English Socialists any real influence on practical politics, nor, most vitally necessary of all, had it brought ideal Socialism into alliance with the actual proletarian movement. The Fabian Society was the organisation that first did anything of this kind. In one of the Society's pamphlets, containing an address given by Mr. G. B. Shaw to the Birmingham Fabian Society, there is an account of the idealist aspirations of the early Fabians; but the critics of the Society will, I fear, continue to regard it as, from the first, an opportunist organisation. The name of the Society betrays the idea upon which it was based, and if Anarchists and other enthusiasts obtruded themselves among the early members, they must, one would imagine, have been very uncomfortable.

The Fabian Society has never been a fighting organisation; its work has ever been educational,

and that in two ways. From within, the Society has striven to educate the Socialist movement itself into harmony with English political methods; while it has attempted to convert the outside world, not so much to the belief in Socialism, as to the Socialistic treatment of every individual problem of contemporary politics. Had London in truth been the political centre of England, the Fabian Society might have become the leading force in British Socialism. Unfortunately, from a democratic point of view, London is the most hopelessly provincial place in England—the wilderness through whose interminable streets no echo of the real life of the nation can penetrate. It is this, much more than its middle-class membership, that has given to Fabianism a temper curiously remote from the democratic movement itself. The metropolis of the democratic movement in England is not any particular town, but the manufacturing districts in which organic Socialism has been built up. The checkweighman of a colliery village, who has served on the Co-operative Store Committee, and acted as secretary for the Local I.L.P. Branch, is in far closer actual touch with the formative forces of British democracy than almost any one of London's millions. The average Londoner is thus, from the point of view of actual insight into the contemporary movement, as provincial, though in a different way, as the Dorsetshire labourer. By reason probably of its remoteness from the actual centres of organic Socialism, of Trade Unionism and Co-operation, Fabianism has never

succeeded in gaining the confidence of the people, nor in giving any effective aid to their political organisations.

But if London is provincial from the point of view of the actual proletarian movement, it is truly the metropolis of England from almost every other; and, in 1883, it was too early to set about organising a party, while there was much other valuable work to be done. Socialism stood as a force almost alien to English thought, it was purely a revolutionary, not a reform movement.

The result of Fabian methods began soon to show themselves, both in a subtle modification of educated public opinion, and in the character of the democratic movement generally. Not tying themselves particularly to Karl Marx, the leaders of the Society, many of them, made a very thorough and critical study of the classical economists. The result was that they rapidly gained for Socialism an economic standing a good deal higher in reality, and enormously higher in public estimation, than it had ever had before. The unfortunate lecturer who condescended to confute the Socialists from the teachings of Political Economy, for the first time found himself face to face with opponents who knew all the classical economists had to say, and were not driven at every turn to take refuge behind a German of whom nobody but themselves knew anything. More valuable still was the series of pamphlets, in which the Fabians now commenced to tackle, not so much the first principles of

Socialism, as current working-class politics generally. If any public, especially any social, question came to the front, the Fabian method was to make a careful independent study of the matter, and present to the public, in a penny pamphlet, a thoughtful statement of the case and some common-sense, and incidentally socialistic, suggestions for a solution. Trades Councils and other working-class organisations, ploughing their way through seas of rhetoric towards a solution of some aspect of the "condition of England question," suddenly found themselves with something definite to talk about. Statistics, hitherto hidden away in Mulhall and Giffen, were made matters of common knowledge in the widely circulated tract "Facts for Socialists." The effect was to strengthen the contact between theoretic and organic Socialism in England, between the people speculating about an ideal Society in London, and those dealing with the actual conditions of life and labour throughout the land. As soon as a new difficulty suggested itself to the latter, the Fabians were ready to save them the trouble of thinking out the problem for themselves; and would present them with the latest results of Socialist research and thought in a pamphlet — price one penny, with the usual reduction on taking a quantity. As nobody except the Socialists had any answer to give to the problems of poverty, or even any clear conception that such problems existed, the Fabian replies did not suffer from competition.

The results were not long in showing themselves.

Before many years were over, Fabian ideas were among the commonplaces of Trade Union politics. Trades Councils were submitting to all candidates at Town Council elections lists of questions provided for them by provincial Fabian Societies or culled from Fabian pamphlets. British democracy rapidly steered away from the individualist view of life, and became conscious of a common purpose. Unfortunately, the gain was mainly on one side. The Fabians, living mostly in London, in very imperfect touch with the organised workers, taught much, but learnt comparatively little. In spite of its surface appearance of modernity, there is a flavour of the nineties about Fabianism yet. We move fast in these days, and ten years may make of a man who fails to keep in touch with the people as much out of date as a Chartist or Owenite.

The pressure of circumstances, and the influence of much definitely Socialist and "social" teaching, had begun to tell, not only on the ideas, but the temper of organised Labour. The younger and more studious Trade Unionists were moving far from the attitude of acceptance characteristic of the previous thirty years. Such books as George's *Progress and Poverty* and Bellamy's *Looking Backward* were having a powerful influence on the younger minds, and ideas of wider social reform were becoming the subjects of discussion at Trade Union Congresses. The rule of "no politics within the Union" was becoming more and more irksome to the new class of Unionists; while the skilled

workers, to whom Unionism was then practically confined, began to take a revived interest in the welfare of the unorganised labourers. The Dockers' Strike of 1889 is an important era, not only in Trade Unionism, but in the progress of working-class thought. From it, in the main, sprang the New Unionism, which not only provided such "unskilled" labourers as the Dockers, Gas Workers, and General Labourers with effective organisations of their own, but helped to make the poletariat generally vastly more conscious of common interests and aims. As the more active spirits among the younger men were rapidly becoming Socialists, the new unions naturally found their officials largely among men of advanced opinions. A little Socialist army found a foothold at the Trade Union Congress, to the confusion of the men of an older generation.

The unemployed agitation and the conflict in Trafalgar Square aroused, late in the decade, some alarm as to the progress of Socialism, and caused the subject to be a good deal discussed. These alarms may have been useful as an advertisement to Socialist literature. At any rate, in 1889, the Fabian Society published their most successful manifesto. *Fabian Essays in Socialism* is perhaps still the best literary attempt to translate Socialism into the language of British politics.

During the course of the Unionist Parliament of 1886–92, English Socialism, both organic and theoretic, made substantial progress. At the beginning of the period, individualism was the accepted creed

of almost everyone in the country; at its close, English politics had gone far, not certainly to accept Socialism, but to close for ever with the tradition of a century and a half. At the beginning, advanced Radicalism was enthusiastic over Mr. Jesse Collings' ideal of peasant proprietorship, for "Three Acres and a Cow"; at its close, this idea had gone far to give way before Taxation of Land Values and Nationalisation of the Land. The early nineties saw the Progressives in command of the London County Council, and a new civic enthusiasm forming in almost all the great cities. In 1886, Socialism was the creed of a few revolutionary enthusiasts; in 1892 it was being discussed in every intelligent household, and in hundreds of debating societies throughout the land; while its latest newspaper, *The Clarion*, was gaining a powerful influence in the cities of Yorkshire and Lancashire. The Liberal programmes of the eighties were nothing more than logical extensions of those of the previous generation; the Newcastle Programme of 1891 was a rather indigestible "haggis," containing ingredients supplied by individualistic Liberalism and Mr. Sidney Webb. At the opening of the Parliament, Socialism had hardly any English literature; at its close, *Looking Backward* and *Fabian Essays* were selling by thousands, and Sir William Harcourt had proclaimed that "we are all Socialists now." This is not to say that either Sir William or middle-class people generally understood or approved of Socialism; but it all shows the influence of the changed atmosphere of thought. Socialism in the

future, as in the past, would have to fight its way against a swarm of hostile vested interests. Whatever the possessing classes might profess or feel, politics would still be dominated mainly by the clash of interests, not of sentiments. But it was something that even vested interests should, for the future, fight with an uneasy conscience, that Labour had become possessed of a new ideal.

For this last is the most important result of the period. Organic Socialism, the network of new institutions formed during the last generation by the workers themselves, had become conscious of a new unity, partly conscious of a new purpose. At the same time that Trade Unionism received a great accession of numerical strength by the successful formation of unions among unskilled labourers, it became touched with an idealism not known for forty years. The work of the last generation had been to educate Trade Unionism in the practical affairs of life, to give it stability and financial strength. But this genuine progress had not been achieved without loss. The strong mechanics' unions had tended to form themselves into an "aristocracy of Labour," each union pursuing its own business, with comparatively little regard to the general condition of labour outside its particular trade, or the poverty of those without the charmed circle of the skilled trades. The universal sympathy with the Dockers, and the enthusiasm of the "new" Unionists, tended to alter this. The ice of a generation began to thaw, and

the way was free for a common Labour policy and a Labour party.

The men who came to the front during this period to a large extent illustrate what was happening. The Socialists of the early eighties, who naturally rise first to the mind, were for the most part middle-class idealists, but slightly in touch with the working class. Such genuine Labour men as were connected with the movement were, at the time, unknown and of little influence. Between conscious Socialism and the unconscious socialistic organisations of the people, there was a great gulf fixed, and mutual helpfulness or common action was hardly possible. But the Socialists who came to the front during this time were of the people themselves. The names of Messrs. Hardie, Burns, Mann, Tillett, and Curran occur at once, and remind us that Socialism had become possessed of a number of capable advocates among the trusted leaders of working-class thought. These names are significant of much. A bridge across the gulf that separated idealist and proletarian had been at last constructed, and mutual action was no longer impossible. Socialists had now an opportunity of doing, under better conditions, and with a better intellectual training, what Owenism had before failed to do. It was not to a mob, but to an organised army, that the Socialist had now to appeal, to an army possessed of overwhelming political power. It was true this army had not been organised for the purpose of achieving

Socialism, and that it had many necessary duties to perform in present-day life, but it was equally true that Socialism was only the logical outcome of its own narrower outlook. As the old Whig stood to the Liberal, as the mid-century Liberal stood to the philosophical Radical, so the old Unionism stood to the new, and the new to Socialism. The modern Socialist looks with discerning eyes upon the tangled, often conflicting, only half self-conscious world of Co-operation and Trade Unionism, and plucks out the heart of its mystery. He sees in it the imperfect striving of humanity after a higher social order, based on mutual aid, on co-operation, equality, and fellowship. But he sees more than this. He sees in it the training school of democracy. He notes the evolution of a new expert class in the committee men, delegates, and salaried secretaries of these great organisations, the servants, and not the masters of the people. He sees the constructive tendencies of the age spreading from men to women, and notes how the 90,000 organised women workers of the cotton trade are pressing for a direct influence on the legislation that shapes their lives; how the 20,000 women of the Co-operative Guild act as an informing and inspiring influence in the great movement of which they are a part. He sees in the growing organisation of the workers, a lever with which to move the world of politics. And, while he sees these things which can be weighed and counted, the phenomenal aspect of the whole, he feels the silent changes they are working in the minds of the rank and file alike. He sees the people becoming

accustomed not to isolated, but to common action, each learning to find his well-being bound up with that of his fellows. He sees the gradual socialisation of English thought, of which all institutional socialism is at best but the external witness. The manifestations of the social spirit in England are partial and imperfect because the social spirit is itself partial and imperfect; as the one has grown, so has the other; when the one is universal, so will the other be also.

And while the great deeds they have done inspire him with love and respect for the people, he is alive to the limitations of it all. There are only two million Trade Unionists and three million Co-operators out of about fourteen million manual labourers, men and women, in the country. Vast populations in the towns are yet unorganised, while the agricultural labourers are as yet hardly further advanced than they were sixty years ago. Much yet remains to be done, and the conscious Socialist will realise that he can only move with the people. But the results already achieved will convince him that what has been so well begun will be continued. He is not an isolated dreamer. He is in touch with the movement of the age, the confidant of its secret thought. It is not his work to create Socialism; Socialism has created him, the Socialism which, whether he works for it or not, must assuredly triumph.

But while a community of feeling between organised Labour and theoretic Socialism had thus made much progress in the early nineties, no working alliance

had yet been formed between them. Labour was growing conscious of the need for political action, and was rapidly absorbing ideas essentially socialistic in character. But Labour did not yet, for the most part, realise that these ideas were not at all, and could never be, shared by parties depending for their fighting funds on the subscriptions of great capitalists. The idea of Labour representation was no new one, and was spreading rapidly; but the working class, as a whole, was as yet not convinced of the necessity of paying for its own politics. The workers wished to call the tune; they had not yet learned that, in that case, they must pay the piper. Hence it was held enough to extract pledges from candidates who had no particular knowledge of Labour conditions, and no appreciation of the needs on which the Labour programme was based. Such pledges were not very difficult to obtain,—the less any particular candidate understood them, the more likely, on the whole, he was to consent. When obtained, they were practically worthless. Only on those questions upon which the great parties are at issue is the pledge of an individual candidate of any value; none others are likely to be seriously fought. Now the great parties were not in conflict at all upon Labour questions—the burning issue between them was Home Rule for Ireland. Any pledge, then, that a candidate on either side gave, about the legal limitation of the Hours of Labour, or Old Age Pensions, for instance, was at most a record of his pious opinion on the matter, it brought the problem

no nearer to a solution. Still it was something that Labour was at last knocking at the door of privilege, even if it was doing so in too obsequious a manner.

And throughout the Labour world there were already many who were thinking of a bolder policy. As long ago as 1874, thirteen candidates had stood as direct representatives of Labour, on a question similar to that which, long afterwards, brought the Labour Representation Committee into existence. Two, Alexander MacDonald and Thomas Burt, had been successful; but the settlement of the immediate point at issue, and the lack of any permanent party organisation, had allowed the movement to become merged in Liberalism. Nor had Labour at that time developed a policy of its own irreconcilable with capitalist Radicalism. At the General Election of 1892, however, the idea of direct and independent Labour Representation had already made some progress. Mr. Cunninghame Graham, elected as a Liberal, had, during the course of the previous Parliament, developed into a revolutionary Socialist, and sought re-election as such. Public opinion was not ripe for that yet, but what Parliament lost in interest was gained for the literature of travel. Far more important were the three Labour victories at South-West Ham, Battersea, and Middlesbro'. The sequels to these three victories contrast very strikingly. Mr. John Havelock Wilson, who succeeded in defeating Mr., now Sir William Robson at Middlesbro', was rapidly reconciled to the party he had opposed, and shared in the *débâcle* of 1895. Mr. John Burns,

more slowly, settled into a practical administrator, losing touch with the Labour Movement. Mr. Keir Hardie, standing from the first for independence, became, more than any man, the inspirer of Labour, the creator of a new party.

CHAPTER IV

THE INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY

In 1893 the Independent Labour Party was formed, and held its first Conference at Bradford. Even before that time there were scattered branches under that name in various large centres, notably at Manchester and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It was Bradford, however, that first called a national Conference, and in that town was born the national organisation now famous. The immediate occasion of its formation is significant. A strike had occurred at the Maningham Mills, in which the Labour forces of Bradford took a deep interest. Equally so did the employers, prominent Liberal and prominent Conservative working together to beat the men. As a result the operatives decided that those who had been telling them all along that the capitalists of neither party had any real sympathy with Labour were right. They accordingly called a Conference and founded the Independent Labour Party.

I give these details, less because of their historic interest, than because they are typical of the whole progress of the Independent Labour Movement since. The occasion, as we have seen, was a clash between the immediate interests of Labour and Capital on a concrete issue; the question of Socialism, as such,

was not involved in it at all, at least directly. The propaganda of Socialism had certainly a lot to do with the matter. Hundreds of similar quarrels, characterised by similar proofs of the solidarity of capitalism, Liberal and Conservative, had happened before without any such revolutionary result. But for the last few years working-class Socialists had been vigorously preaching the doctrine of independence, and proclaiming this very fact of capitalist solidarity. To an idea, as an idea, the stolid Englishman generally pays little heed, while he is as little apt as most people to generalise from a mere series of object-lessons, however significant. When, however, an idea, often preached but slightly heeded, is suddenly made luminous by a striking instance of its truth, things are very different. Throughout the industrial world for generations, there had been ceaseless conflict between Capital and Labour, the result of which had been the widespread industrial organisation of Labour itself. This conflict was entirely conscious, and, in industrial disputes, there were no Liberals or Conservatives among working-men, but only unionists and blacklegs. But in politics also there was a less obvious but equally real conflict of interests between capitalists and workmen. Liberalism and Toryism, as understood by the working people of Lancashire and Yorkshire, were essentially different things from the same political creeds as believed in by the middle-class members of either party. I do not mean that the working-class voters did not approve, much less acquiesce in, the particular proposals made by their

party leaders; but that there was a whole world of practical interests, essentially political, in which the workers of both parties were united, but which the leaders of neither party touched. These interests, arising out of the practical needs of organised Labour in its daily conflict with capitalism, were common to the Liberal working-man of Yorkshire and the cotton operative of Tory Lancashire; they were not of much concern to the Liberal or Tory candidates of either. Within the framework of capitalistic society there had grown up, during the previous fifty years, the beginnings of a new social order, now consciously struggling to the birth. Once in every five or six years the working-man had been roused to a passing and feverish interest in party questions, national and imperial, and had taken his part, on one side or the other, keenly enough in the tumult of a General Election. The excitement over, however, he had resumed his work, and his quiet, continual wrestle with those other politics on which current Liberalism and Conservatism said nothing. These politics, Labour politics, did not need to be brought home to him by the rhetoric of candidates or newspapers, they sought him out themselves at every hour of the day. The wages of labour, the hours of work, the uncertainty of employment, the provision for old age, the status of Trade Unions, the feeding and care of children, these things could never be forgotten by the worker. The social problem rose with him before daylight, followed him to the loom or the bench, met him on his return from work, and watched by his bed at night with questionings that only the

Socialist could answer. The fact that, neither individually nor collectively, he had any hold on the means of life that would assure him a comfortable and continued existence was a conclusion the workman could not escape. That only by association with his fellow-workman, not by individual rivalry, could he ever get such a hold, was borne home to the Trade Unionist or Co-operator by the experience of his daily life.

The immediate origin of the Labour Party was thus characteristically British. From that day to this, the progress of the movement has been similar in character. Men who join a more *doctrinaire* organisation, do so probably because they are thorough-going, class-conscious Socialists; but, at first at least, many must have joined the I.L.P. largely from general sympathy with the masses, and despair of other parties. Some particular question has brought the forces of Labour and Capital into acute conflict, and increased the number of workmen who have become determined to seek salvation in a party of their own. Once determined on that, the recruit becomes increasingly conscious of the underlying unity between his own aspirations and those of the Socialists with whom he is brought into contact. Politics become more real to him as they come more closely into life, and he finds himself giving a continuous attention to them of which the Conservative or Liberal is incapable except at election times. A continual supply of pamphlets and speeches, good, bad, and indifferent, dealing with the problems of his daily life, keep him alive to the intimate

connection between the ideals of Socialism and the practical questions of organised Labour. As the leaven works, the young organic Socialism of England, built up in two generations almost destitute of central purpose or idea, becomes gradually permeated with the Socialist ideal. And such permeation is effective, for the community of aim is fundamentally real. The Trade Unionist does not, as the Socialist does, see the end of common action from the beginning, but he is looking in the same direction. The "permeation" of the older parties, at one time popular with the Fabian Society, was a totally different thing. That was an attempt to infect with Socialism organisations led and financed by men whose ideals were not merely narrower, but opposite to their own. The sympathy, natural to most men, for the sorrows of the poor, the desire, common to politicians, to conciliate voters, compelled individuals and parties to patch up their programmes with fragments of Socialism, but the inner spirit remained unchanged.

Whatever its limitations, or however little it might be suited to any other land in the world, the new party was singularly well adapted to the social environment in which it would henceforth have to struggle for survival. The defects and the qualities of English life were alike reflected in its spirit and methods. The majority of its earlier, as of its present, members shared the feelings and general life experience of the people among whom they had to work. They used few phrases that were not drawn from the common stock of British thought. They

were Trade Unionists, inspired indeed by Socialism, but just as much interested, generally more so, in current questions of wages and hours, as any member of the Unions to which they belonged. Their fellow-Unionists, therefore, instead of finding the Independent Labour men indulging in rhetoric about the rights of the workers, whenever any question of immediate trade policy was to be considered, generally found them the most useful members of the branch. Merely by reason of their fitness for the various posts, the branches found themselves continually choosing Socialists for the offices, paid and unpaid, of the Trade Union world. A higher general level of ability and a far deeper enthusiasm gave to the handful of Socialists an influence out of all proportion to their numbers. They came to be listened to with growing respect, instead of curiosity. No man could look upon that Socialist at least as a vague dreamer whom he was continually proving to be a competent and helpful comrade in the routine business of a workman's life. One consequence of this is curious enough. When not one in ten of the Trade Unionists would have described himself as a Socialist, the Trade Union Congress, composed of delegates, elected almost entirely by Tories, Liberals, and men of no politics, startled the nation by passing a resolution in favour of the national ownership of the means of productive distribution and exchange.

With the addition of a faith in Socialism, the Independent Labour man generally shared all the virtues and limitations of the best type of his

fellows. Very possibly he was an active Socialist, quite possibly also he took "a drop too much" occasionally, but he was even more likely to be a Methodist local preacher or perhaps a bigoted "Rechabite." His views on marriage and the family did not differ from those of other workmen of his class, and he was even less likely than other men to do anything unconventional or shocking to British respectability—he was generally far too busy. Altogether, the new type of Socialist, developed by "I.L.P." influence was just the sort of person his fellow-workmen found it easy to associate with and to trust. When he was "religious," he filled the chapels of the district with a quaint mixture of Socialist aspiration and evangelical doctrine; if he had finally severed himself from orthodoxy, he joined a "Labour Church," where they sang hymns and offered prayers in the most approved fashion of British non-conformity. It was a Socialism racy of the soil.

Many of the most brilliant men and women of the Socialist movement have, from the first, given their services to the Independent Labour Party; but even their methods have, consciously or unconsciously, been moulded to the fashion of the national mind. With the ordinary run of speakers, who address thousands of local meetings every week throughout the summer, only a thoroughly popular style is possible, for they understand no other. The first text-book of the average party man was not, as with the speakers

of the Social Democratic Federation, Marx's chapters on the value theory, nor even the critical Fabian Essays, but Mr. Blatchford's partly sentimental, partly practical, and altogether English *Merrie England.* The work done about this time by the *Clarion* writers was of enormous value to the movement. For the first time, the artisans of the North had presented to them a Socialism which, whatever else it might do, never puzzled them, perhaps the one thing the Briton cannot endure. The undying sentiment of brotherhood was boldly appealed to in simple English, and in this the *Clarion* only carried on a tradition as old, at least, as John Ball; but the extraordinary modern craving for a weekly comic paper was also satisfied. Mysterious continentalisms like "proletariat," "bourgeoisie," "class consciousness," and "surplus value" were rarely mentioned in a paper utterly uninfluenced by the Hegelian philosophy. The people of Yorkshire and Lancashire became devoted to the new journal. Many of the *Clarion's* weekly contemporaries may have had far wider circulations, but I doubt if any was so well read. The *Clarion* was not merely read by the husband, but went round the family, was lent to the neighbours, and finally treasured up for future reference. The young party had a bible of its own, a bible coming out in weekly numbers.

Shaped roughly, so as to fit in with its British environment, the Independent Labour Party had nevertheless much to learn. Most of its members

were totally inexperienced in electioneering, and had the very vaguest ideas about the work and money required to win a seat in Parliament. The usual weekly subscription of a penny per member, too, could only be adequate when the numerical strength of the branch was very great. Bye-election fights, undertaken with very little money, by a young and imperfect organisation, resulted in very poor votes, and on the whole encouraged the other parties to think lightly of their new rival. The people, too, had not become accustomed to the idea of independent Labour action. There was still much faith in Liberalism left; and had the Liberal Parliament of 1892–95 been able and willing to do much for Labour, quite possibly the new organisation might never have got a foothold. The elections of 1895 revealed at once the party's strength and weakness. Far too many contests were fought, and the average vote was only about 1500, proving how widely the new branches had really spread, but proving also that the party, surprised by a sudden dissolution, had a very imperfect notion of how to marshal its forces. Most of the Glasgow seats were fought, instead of concentrating all the local forces on the most hopeful. Some of these candidates were well-known men, but others were not familiar to the Trade Union world, and a few knew little about either Socialism or the Independent Labour Party. Mr. Keir Hardie's seat at South-West Ham was lost, and not a single election was won.

Two things, however, were gained. The Labour Party had gathered experience, and some progress had been made in getting the British electorate to grasp the ideas of a Third Party, and of the independence of Labour. It is astonishing how difficult it is to get the Englishman to understand an idea unless it is embodied in something concrete. Nothing but the actual presence of a Third Party would, I believe, have convinced many people that such a thing was possible. Even now, the Press has hardly grasped the new feature of politics, and very generally considers the Labour Party is or ought to be a wing of Liberalism. London, as a whole, having little actual experience of the movement, does not understand it at all.

Had the party selected the constituencies to be fought in such a way as to secure a higher general average of voting strength, or if it had succeeded in winning even one contest, it would probably have gained great help in its now insistent message of independence. Socialists outside of the Labour Party, who disapprove of the present alliance with the Trade Unionists, complain that that alliance tends to hide the Socialism of the Independent Labour Party. My experience of many meetings held by the party tends to prove the contrary. Until the Trade Unionists had learnt the lesson of independence, the need for it took up a large part of almost every Independent Labour Party speech; now that a million Unionists are actually subscribing for the purpose, the

speakers generally have time to deal with other things. Their propaganda is now as purely Socialist as anyone could wish, and is certainly producing an enormous effect; in the early years, they were often called upon to prove to sceptical audiences that a Third Party was not a thing impossible.

The new party, even before the General Election, had branches all over the north of England; and men and women lecturers of very high ability practically devoted the whole of their time to the work. At a time when the party had no members in the House of Commons, and was generally regarded as an obscure clique of fanatics, it was probably holding more political meetings of one sort and another than both the other parties combined. In speeches, pamphlets, and leaflets, the party emphasised its central point—independence. Its members individually carried the same message into the workshops and trade societies. The Socialist workman, even if he be not a public speaker or writer, is generally a very different person from a Liberal or Conservative. Unlike theirs, his politics never go to sleep. In the last minutes of the dinner-hour, when he and his mates are waiting for the signal to resume work, he starts a discussion about some recent speech or pamphlet. He is a voluntary news agent, keeping a stock of *Labour Leaders* and pamphlets for sale among his workmates; he is armed with telling leaflets for free distribution; he has Socialistic suggestions to make on every point of current interest to Labour.

A Trade Union branch or a mining village, where there are one or two Independent Labour men, rapidly becomes infected with a new spirit, even if few of the men become professed Socialists. At present, one member in every thirty or thereabouts of the Independent Labour Party has been elected to some local governing body, a fact that is eloquent as to the enormous influence the party exercises outside its own ranks. In an article in the *Daily News*, published shortly after the Colne Valley Election, Dr. Macnamara tells how much he is impressed by the new instrument of politics forged by the Independent Labour Party, as he sees it—the ceaseless stream of speeches, carried on almost as busily when an election seems years away as at the moment of conflict. Yet even he misses the yet more important work of the rank and file. What has made the party is the fact that almost every man and woman in it is an active propagandist of some sort, if not to the general public, to the next-door neighbour.

The party then, though badly defeated at the General Election of 1895, was not, as its opponents probably supposed, deprived of influence. A strong Conservative Ministry was firmly seated in office, and there was nothing to do in national politics except to fight an occasional unsuccessful bye-election. But, during the next few years, the hitherto unknown members of the party began to figure on Borough Councils, School Boards, and Boards of Guardians, and to take a vigorous part in the work of these bodies. This had a double

value. Local government became profoundly influenced by Socialistic ideas, far more rapidly than Parliament had been, and the party itself gained in a variety of ways. The local elections are themselves, as every politician knows, a very valuable means of developing the party organisation. Most of the branches of the party gained, during the Parliament of 1895 to 1900, a real practical insight into the work of electioneering; while many of their members gained a knowledge of public work which was most valuable for the future. A certain prestige, too, was gained by having elected persons as members of the branch, a fact of which the members have never been slow to avail themselves.

It was a dead time in national politics. The wave of Imperialism was passing over the country, carrying away with it much of the Liberalism of the Victorian Era. As Mr. Gladstone neared his end, the synthesis of ideas for which his personality stood seemed breaking up; and those of his followers who were too old to be influenced by the new spirit of Socialism either succumbed to the reaction, or slipped quietly from the public eye, uttering ineffectual protests against the gathering materialism which they could not understand. Liberalism became impotent, torn with the conflicting ideas of two generations, and the rivalries of leaders. On the surface, at least, the reaction seemed to be triumphant everywhere. As in Tennyson's "weird battle in the West" which ended an age, politics seemed a struggle without

design or leadership, where "friend slew friend, not knowing whom he slew."

But whatever might be going on at Westminster with whatever disastrous effects for progress, in the rest of the country the social organism was growing as steadily as ever. The stream of tendency which, in all ages, slowly or rapidly, compels men to substitute "the state of mutual peace for that of mutual war," to modify "the war of individual against individual," might have its surface ruffled by the winds of Imperialism, but could not be stayed. And now circumstances were preparing the way for a notable advance. The invention of electricity is a thing likely to have enormous social and moral as well as material consequences, and the general application of electricity to tramway traction come just at the right moment for Socialism in the towns. Candidates at borough council elections had, for the last ten years, been finding themselves subjected to novel conditions. Instead of being left to fight their triennial contests on ordinary party lines, merely as Liberals or Conservatives, they had been closely questioned by delegates from the Trades Councils upon a definite programme, embodying a consistent policy of public ownership in the great monopolies of gas and water. During the last year or two, they had often been faced with a third party of opponents, who were always at one upon these things. The result was that the candidate who wished to succeed had been compelled to adopt some definite attitude upon these questions, either to favour them and keep the Labour vote, or to

reject them and curry favour with the shareholding class. It was no longer easy to win a municipal contest merely by stating that the candidate was "a large ratepayer" and "had lived all his life in the ward." The electors wished to know more than that the candidate's "interests were their interests"; they wanted to understand what he conceived these mutual interests to be. The result was not long in showing itself. Apart altogether from the addition of definite Labour members to the councils, the average borough councillor became endowed with a very much broader conception of his duty to the town. The programme on which he sought re-election became often vastly different from the one on which he had been first chosen. From the ideas of civic rule that were now being freely debated at the street corners and in every Trade Union, he culled a programme that was often almost identical with that of the Labour man himself; and, having once adopted this programme, he was obliged to defend it, and get to understand what was meant by the things it contained.[1]

Soon the policy of municipalising monopolies had become almost a commonplace among progressive councillors in the manufacturing towns. It had been customary, in the days when horse trams were being established in the towns, to grant to a private company a lease of the lines, frequently for a term of twenty-one years. In

[1] Several curious instances of programme stealing from Labour men have come under the writer's notice. Opponents have waited until the Labour candidate published his address, and then, a day or two afterwards, produced one almost as much a copy as a paraphrase.

the nineties, these leases were falling in; and after a brief struggle with steam and cable traction, it soon became evident that the new system would be an electric one. This vastly increased the importance of the question. In proportion as electricity takes a greater place in modern life, the question of its public ownership becomes more vital. The ownership of electric tramways compels a public authority to become a manufacturer of electric power, and prepares the way for it to control all future developments of electricity as well. Though this was hardly realised at the time, and is not yet perhaps generally understood, the growth of Socialism during the previous ten years had fully prepared the boroughs for a policy of municipalisation when the time arrived.

The two earliest instances of municipal tramways in Britain, those of Huddersfield and Glasgow, are instructive. Up till recently, it must be understood, the Standing Orders of the House of Commons put a serious obstacle in the way of municipal ownership. Parliament, at one time, was unwilling even to consider any measure for a municipal tramway undertaking, so long as any substantial private company was prepared to do the work. Then if a publicly owned tramway service were instituted in any borough, it must be in one where no private syndicate considered there was any chance of making a profit. As long as the Standing Orders and temper of Parliament continued unchanged, there could

only be corporate tramways in places where it was at least anticipated at the start that they would not pay.

This seems to have been the case at Huddersfield, a small and somewhat scattered town. From the point of view of the business man, there is little reason for running trams in such a place at all; but to a corporation, looking at the matter as trustees of the community, not merely as shareholders, there may be much. The Huddersfield people seem to have desired a tramway service, not for profit, but in order to prevent congestion and overcrowding. They ran their tramways as a public convenience, giving their people long journeys for low fares; until the hostile Standing Orders were removed, and they were secure against having their undertaking taken from them by a private company against their will.

The same clash between the municipalist's view of tramways, as a public service for the convenience of the citizens and to relieve congestion in towns, which may, incidentally, be made a source of profit, and that of private enterprise, which naturally regards them purely from the point of view of dividends, had peculiar consequences in Glasgow. Probably the relations between any private tramway company and the district it serves are never very cordial. The public authority having, in that case, no fear of loss, and regarding only the public convenience, will be continually urging the company to grant lower fares, or to continue the service into districts where the latter sees

no prospect of profit. The company will naturally object. One instance has come under my notice where a Borough Council has gone the length of buying rails, and even starting to lay them, which the Tramway Company, in possession of a secure lease, have flatly refused to work. In another, finding a route not so profitable as it expected, the Company complied with its legal obligations by running one or two cars a day, leaving the public quite helpless.

In 1894, the relations between the Glasgow Corporation and the Tramway Company became so strained, that the latter, confident of the helplessness of the City Council, went on strike. The Company refused to work the cars except on its own conditions. Glasgow was likely to be without any trams at all, and probably any less spirited City Council would have given way. Not so Glasgow, however. Horses and cars were bought, and, probably to the amazement of the Company, the Corporation commenced to work the traffic as soon as the Company stopped working. Under the circumstances, the Local Government Board virtually consented to Glasgow carrying on a tramway enterprise with the authority granted to a private company!

This dramatic illustration of the folly of restraining a public authority aroused the interest of the cities of England. It was clear that, with the existing Standing Orders, the financial collapse of any tramway company, or its refusal to carry out its obligations, might at any time leave a

town without any trams at all. Pressure was brought to bear on Parliament, and the obnoxious Standing Order was removed. This rather curious survival of *doctrinaire* individualism was thus removed exactly at the right time, and the way was opened for a new departure in municipal enterprise.

Into the struggle which, during the next few years, turned most of the private tramway undertakings in our industrial towns over to the borough councils, the Independent Labour Party flung itself with enthusiasm. It would have mattered little perhaps had this not been also the era of transition from horse to electric traction. The public ownership of an electric tramway service is a matter of the utmost importance. It, as already said, commits a public body to become manufacturers of electric power, and opens the way for public control of the probable motive power of future industry.

In taking a leading part in the struggle for municipal tramways, the Independent Labour Party was in touch with current working-class sentiment. The certainty with which any borough council could obtain the support of the people, if it proposed to work its tramways itself, was indeed remarkable. I do not know of a single instance in which a council, taking a vote of the burgesses on such an issue, failed to secure a majority. On the other hand, the people of the towns were equally determined to refuse the authorities leave to hand their work over to

others. When we remember that there is a heavy property vote in these plebiscites, this shows clearly how unanimously the people supported the policy of the Independent Labour Party.

It was otherwise in the case of national politics. Here the working classes of the nineties had as yet not formulated a definite programme of their own having relation to the needs of organic Socialism. The spirit of Imperialism found the political world empty, swept, and garnished, and was now hurrying the people forward into the South African war. The same statesmen and newspapers that, in local affairs where the working classes had a faith, were utterly powerless to check their progress, could easily sway them in Imperial matters, where they had none. It was not until the Taff Vale judgment startled the Trade Union world and threatened the security of their painfully gathered savings, that the industrial workers of England fell into line with the Socialists, and the formal political alliance between organic and ideal Socialism became a fact.

CHAPTER V

THE LABOUR REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE

DURING the preceding chapters, we have been watching the gradual adaptation of theoretic Socialism to its English environment. We have seen how, step by step, while retaining its universal principles of co-operation and brotherhood, while still aiming at the co-operative commonwealth, it had fitted itself to impress that idea on the working-class organisations, painfully building up a civilisation in which, in however rudimentary a form, the principle of Socialism itself was involved. Gradually the two streams of theoretic and organic Socialism had been nearing one another; and the idea at the root of the Independent Labour policy, a working alliance between the two, was now certain soon to be realised. The Labour Representation Committee, which, since its electoral successes in January 1906, has taken the name of the Labour Party, was not created by the Taff Vale decision. Trade Unionism could not go on for ever accepting programmes from the Socialists on all questions of local or national government, without sooner or later discovering that there was an underlying unity between the principles of Labour and Socialism. What the insight of the idealist saw

to be true as a universal social principle, the Trade Unionist discovered by experience in his life as a workman, the interdependence of man and man. Each had been doing an essential part of the same great work. While the Trade Union and the Co-operative Society had been educating the people in the management of industry, the Socialist had been inspiring them with the idea of universal union and universal co-operation. Much had been done during the last fifty years, not so much to build up the Co-operative Commonwealth itself, as to create the habits of life and the collective spirit which alone could make it possible. The Trade Unionist, if not yet a Socialist, had at least cut himself adrift from individualism. To take a suggestion from a famous phrase of Mr. Chamberlain's, he had learnt to "think collectively."

The Trade Unionist had learnt to stand by his fellows, to suffer and starve with them, often about some very trivial detail of wages or hours; he was now about to make use of the discipline thus painfully acquired in the wider field of politics. He had learnt how to make use of a small talent; he was now to enter on the lordship of the cities of England. Certainly history will regard the Trade Union Congress of 1899, which sanctioned the Labour Representation Committee, as the most important session of that rather futile "Parliament of Labour." The resolution authorised the Committee to form an association of such Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies, and Socialist organisations

as were willing to join in securing direct Labour representation, independent of either party in the House of Commons.

The immediate occasion of the founding of the Committee was as characteristically British as that which, a few years before, had called the Independent Labour Party into existence. However surely the education of the Unions may have been tending in the direction of independent political action, it was to deal with a concrete issue, not on general principles, that the party was founded. Nor was the particular issue one of Socialist, or even advanced Labour, politics. It was a sound Conservatism that called the Labour Representation Committee together; the determination to defend a thing established, the long accepted immunity of Trade Union funds. The Taff Vale judgment probably never struck the average middle-class man as at all likely to have important political consequences. The unsatisfactory form in which the Trades' Disputies Bill of 1906 was introduced into the House of Commons, after seven years of fiery agitation in the country, shows how little even the political lawyers of the Cabinet understood the Unions' position. The principle that a Trade Union could, under no circumstances, either sue or be sued, was one on which the whole Trade Union world had been built up. For nearly thirty years, for whatever illegal things Trade Unionists might have done, they and they only had been individually responsible; their Union could not be made to pay damages. Damages

in case of injury it could not, of course, claim, but that, to the Union, was only a small disadvantage. It would have required a very strong case indeed before the average British judge, trained by class and association to regard Trade Unions as mischievous institutions, would have awarded damages to a Trade Society against an employer.

It must be remembered, also, that a Trade Union, while not legally a Corporation that can sue or be sued, is a very tangible entity indeed. The amount of its accumulated funds are known; its officers are well-known officials; it retains the power to levy exceptional contributions from its members. Its money, while all available for trade disputes, is also used as friendly benefit for members; for a Trade Union, while primarily a fighting organisation to maintain the actual workers' standard of life, performs many other functions, as well. It is otherwise with the various, temporary or permanent, associations of employers. *They* have no need to accumulate a large common fund for industrial warfare, to engage in picketing peaceful or otherwise; nor are the provisions they had made for their wives and children at stake in any dispute between masters and men. Under the Taff Vale decision, the whole effective energies of Trade Unionism were paralysed, and Unionism had really no option but to take up a struggle for its very existence. But it was necessary to have an intimate knowledge of the workings of Trade Unionism, or to have taken an active

part, on one side or other, in industrial warfare, to understand what a powerful weapon the Taff Vale decision had placed in the hands of employers. England, outside the Trade Unions themselves and the employers' organisations, did not understand, and was not at all prepared for the startling political consequences."[1]

It was for the purpose, first of all, of obtaining an Act of Parliament to retrieve the position of the Unions, then, that the Labour Representation Committee came into existence; but the form the movement took was largely shaped by the influence of twenty years of Socialist teaching. Independent it would probably have been in any case, for the old charter of Trade Unionism had been obtained by a spurt of independent action. But for Socialist teachings, however, it might readily have been only a spurt and nothing more; it is improbable that a permanent organisation would have been formed. Money might have been voted for a certain number of elections, enough to impress the Trade Unionists' will upon one or both of the old parties, and as soon as a satisfactory Act had been obtained, the whole movement might have died out. But the Union funds question gave to their members a much-needed object lesson in the truth of what the Socialists had been telling them for years. In industrial warfare, the Trade Unionist knew no difference between Liberal and Conservative em-

[1] Some people understood more fully what had happened, however. An eminent Conservative lawyer is reported to have said, when he heard the judgment, "Well! It's a good decision, but it's d——d bad law, and it's worse politics."

ployers; he knew perfectly well that, in defending Trade Union conditions, he was equally likely to find an enemy in one camp as the other. Nor were good employers less frequent in either camp; it was not with Liberals or Tories that the Trade Unionists had to fight, but with employers as such.

On no question affecting the status or well-being of Unions was the Trade Unionist prepared to trust any politician who was not actually a manual worker, or, significant exception, a Socialist. In this instance, at least, he must do as the Socialists had been telling him for years he ought always to do—act independently of both political parties. It was inevitable that such an object lesson, following on years of precept, should have its effect; and the Trade Unionists of 1900, unlike those of 1874, took the occasion to found a new permanent political body. Having authorised the Labour Representation Committee, neither the Trade Union Congress nor its Parliamentary Committee concerned themselves very much with its subsequent proceedings. The Parliamentary Committee, as an institution for affecting legislation, is now very much in the position of a dignified old gentleman, who, having introduced an active son into his business, retires more or less into private life. The new organisation had to model its constitution and attract a membership; and had indeed to thrash out again, within its own ranks, the vexed question of independence. The Liberal-Labour men made determined efforts to prevent the new party keeping itself aloof from all others, and heated debates took place at the

annual conferences upon the point. However, the great majority of the delegates were, from the first, independent, and the fight, though fierce, was brief. The "Khaki" election of 1900, suddenly sprung on the country, found the Committee ill prepared with money or candidates. Fewer Labour men were seen than in the election of 1895; but, especially in view of the "Mafeking" fury, the results of those fought were eloquent, both of the progress of Socialism, and of the value of its new alliance with Labour. The average Labour vote advanced from about 1500 to over 4000, and two contests, those fought by Mr. Richard Bell at Derby and Keir Hardie in Merthyr Tydvil, were won. Mr. Bell was the candidate of the Railway Servants, the Union which had been so hard hit by the Taff Vale decision. By his victory at Merthyr, Mr. Hardie returned to Parliament, in the darkest hour of his country's fortunes, but under circumstances that fully justified his life-work for the cause. The foundation of the Labour Representation Committee was a testimonial to his statesmanship and insight. He had striven for years to promote an alliance between Socialism and the working-class organisations, and his hope was now on the verge of realisation. Only devotion and statesmanship of a high order could have produced such a result.

The constructive work needed to form the new party was intricate enough. The originators had, it will be remembered, invited Trade Unionists, Co-operators, and Socialists to join. The Co-

operative Societies, not being directly affected by the Taff Vale judgment, generally took little interest in the new party, and only the Scottish Societies became affiliated. The Independent Labour Party, the Social Democratic Federation, and the Fabian Society accepted the invitation of the Committee; but the Federation, failing to induce the Trade Unionists to adopt Marxian Socialism, quickly retired. They had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing during their twenty years' experience of English political propaganda. As delegates from their individual Unions, they continued to make fruitless efforts to induce the Committee to endorse Marxianism; but, as a body, the Social Democrats have taken no further part in its work.

The Trade Unionists came in rapidly, and the party now has a membership of more than a million. Only some of the Miners' Unions among the larger bodies remain outside, a curious fact when we remember that nowhere has Socialism made such progress as among the miners. Mr. Hardie's victory at Merthyr illustrated this. Officially Mr. Hardie was the candidate, not for Merthyr, but for Preston, and almost all his direct work was put in in that constituency. Only in the few days between his defeat at Preston and the poll at Merthyr was Mr. Hardie able to visit his present constituents. Some of the Merthyr miners, however, had nominated Hardie themselves; and, aided by discord in the Liberal camp, they, to the surprise of everybody inside the movement and out of it, put him in. Thus, by a side gate, the foremost champion

of Independent Labour re-entered the House of Commons.

While in the rest of the Trade Union world the officials are generally more advanced than the men, the rank and file of many of the mining Unions are far more Socialist than their leaders. The solidarity of a mining village is astounding. A new idea may take years to penetrate into it, but when once it has been accepted at all, it is accepted unanimously. A mining village is either Radical or Socialist to a man—and woman, and the propaganda of the last ten years has been rapidly turning Radical mining villages into Socialist ones. In Durham and South Wales, this is especially true, and places could be pointed out where non-Socialists are merely curious survivals of the distant ages—ten years ago. Appointed, for the most part, in the days when all miners were Radicals, and long accepted as honoured members of the Liberal Party, the miners' leaders have, not unnaturally, failed to keep pace with this rapid and unexpected movement among their men, with the result that some of the most Socialistic Unions in England remain outside the Labour Party. Ere long, no doubt, they too will move, and the Labour Party and Trade Unionism will be co-extensive.

Meantime the constitution and finance of the party had to be determined. In an earlier part of this work I have attributed the transformation of Trade Unionism from the small local societies of Early Victorian days, with their ambitious but ineffective attempts at common action, into the

great national amalgamations and federations of the present day, to the improved position of Labour after the repeal of the Corn Laws. It then, for the first time, became possible for the average mechanic to pay an adequate subscription, out of which such organisations as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers could be maintained. A certain economic position must be attained before the workman himself can take action for further improvement. That is why, while we hear so much of the evils of sweating and the slums, the victims of sweated industries can do so little for themselves. They are bound down too tightly by the necessities of each moment to do anything that demands any sacrifice, even of a penny, or the time in which a penny might be earned, to do anything for their own permanent betterment.

Though the Trade Unionists could now readily afford to finance a party of their own, the very smallness of the amount required from each member raised a practical difficulty. It is as easy to collect a weekly subscription of a penny as one of a shilling, while the former sum must generally be gathered by a voluntary agent, and the other by a man paid for the duty. This latter was the crucial difficulty in the way of a large Labour Party, until the Trade Unionists took the matter up. One penny per annum from every Trade Unionist would bring in an income of £8000 a year, and certainly there are as many English men and women favourable to the direct representation of Labour as there are Trade Unionists. But how could we create the

machinery to collect the funds for such a Labour Party, to trace the removals of subscribers and keep in touch with them, except at an expense even greater than the resultant revenue? A moment's thought will show the impossibility of the thing. A working class party must either have a subscription high enough to exclude all but the more earnest politicians, or it must get its subscriptions by some readier method than that of individual collection. This readier method the machinery of Trade Unionism supplies. The Trade Unions have already, for general purposes, elaborated a machinery for collection. It was only necessary to add to its other functions that of a political organisation, and to collect the new fund with the rest, and the thing was done.

Grants from Trade Union funds to fight elections and maintain Labour members were no new thing. For many years, Messrs. Burt, Broadhurst, and others had been sent to Parliament, and paid out of Union money. The rules of the Gasworkers' Union expressly provided for part of the funds to be used for this purpose, to which, indeed, from the first, the "new" Unionism was generally favourable. The Engineers long ago set apart £800 a year for Labour representation, out of which, I believe, they made an allowance to Mr. John Burns. Many Unions, especially since the Taff Vale decision, had passed similar votes; and it was certain that several of them would run and finance candidates at the first opportunity. The movement, in fact, was already in existence. The Labour Party had not come to

create, but to aid and guide. Even without the Labour Representation Committee, and its able secretary, Mr. Ramsey Macdonald, the General Election of 1906 might have produced as many Labour candidates as actually appeared in the field. These candidates, however, would have fought, mainly or entirely, as representatives of particular Unions, without co-ordination and without method. Those, if any, who were successful would have appeared in the House of Commons, not as a united party, but as individuals, owing allegiance to no authority in the House, each perhaps determined to place the particular grievances of his own Union before all others. It would have been class representation of a very narrow description, and the new Labour members would almost certainly have been ineffective. Incidentally, they would, except where endowed with such personalities as that of Mr. Keir Hardie, have probably, sooner or later, become ordinary Liberals or Conservatives.

The Labour Representation Committee saw the danger of this; and, at the Newcastle Conference in 1903, agreed to a constitution, which, while in no way cramping the initiative of the individual Union, secures the unity of the party at elections and in Parliament. If a Trade Union or Socialist body, affiliated to the Labour Party, decides to nominate a candidate, he will, provided he undertakes to fight his election as a candidate of the party, receive the endorsement of its executive, and be put on their list of candidates. If the Labour

forces in any constituency desire to run a candidate, this list will be forwarded to them on application; and they can invite any one of those whose names are on it they prefer. When they have made their selection, provided the conditions of independence of other parties and adhesion to the Labour party are complied with, the candidature will be endorsed. The bulk of the money must be provided locally, or by the Trade Union chiefly concerned; but the party itself will give a grant in aid, if needed, and will contribute £200 a year towards the salary of the Labour man if he is successful.

Towards such a scheme, the Labour Representation Committee imposed a levy of thirty shillings per thousand members on all societies affiliated, and, in 1903, a further grant of one penny per member, which was enough to give the Committee an income of £5000 a year. The great success of the party at the General Election, however, necessitated grants of £200 a year each to twenty-nine members of Parliament; and it became necessary to raise the annual levy to twopence per member, at which sum it now stands. The framing of this constitution was certainly a very clever piece of statesmanship. Any candidate selected must, it will be seen, first command the confidence of his own society, he must gain—and keep—that of the Labour party as a whole, and he must be also acceptable to the organised trades in the constituency. Neither the national body, the local trades, or any particular Union can impose their nominee on one another. The constitution insists upon some particular

organisation becoming responsible for the bulk of the election expenses, and on sufficient local support to guarantee that the needed work will be done; while if these are forthcoming, it places at the service of the candidate and his committee the practical help and skilled advice of a great organisation, and of the leaders of Labour politics.

One further word about the constitution of the party, as a body composed both of Trade Unionists and avowed Socialists. Of the three leading Socialist organisations of England, two joined the Labour Representation Committee, and one declined. The position of the Social Democratic Federation, who refused to have anything to do with the new body, is logical enough; and, given their point of view, it is probably just as well for the internal harmony of the party that they have remained outside. The Federation has been striving for years to establish a "class conscious" revolutionary workers' party, bent on expropriating the present possessors of land and capital, and establishing a Socialist republic. Men who think thus will never ally themselves with the Unions until the Unions are avowedly Socialist and revolutionary. But though the English Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies are actually building up a new social order, and though a very large minority of their members are conscious Socialists, the progress of this great movement is guided mainly by events, and not by theories. Those who take part in it obey the "urge of the world," the secular need for mutual aid, which is at the root of all society, enforced upon them daily by the

tyranny of modern industrial conditions, just as they would have done if Karl Marx had never lived. They feel their needs, one by one, by experience, and take action only to provide for those needs they feel. The Socialism is real enough, but it is subconscious, not vocal, only discovering itself by degrees, as the immediate issues of life force it to disclose itself; it is entirely practical, not theoretic.

The adhesion of the Independent Labour Party, an enthusiastically Socialist body, to the Labour Representation Committee, was an act of faith. But it was a faith based on insight, and the experience of many years. Long ago, Mr. Keir Hardie had divined the inherent Socialism of the English working man, at a time when the worker himself would probably have considered it a personal insult to accuse him of Socialism. But even when Socialism was least regarded, at any time during the last twenty years, the solution of any vexed problem of the day that was most likely to find acceptance with a Trade Unionist audience, Liberals and Conservatives alike, was sure to be one that could not be defended on any conceivable theory of society but that of the Socialist. The Independent Labour Party, therefore, really needed no specific guarantee from the Trade Unionists; it could "trust to their conditions." As question after question comes in the future into the arena of practical politics, it is morally certain that the answer of the Labour Party will be a Socialistic one; and that, if Labour exercises any influence on the result, the settle-

ment of it will advance society another stage on the road to Socialism. "Individuals," says Lassalle, "may be deceived about their own interests, but classes never." Both the Federation and the Independent Labour Party believed that Socialism was to the interests of Labour; the Independent Labour Party acted upon its belief, justly confident of the result. The Trade Unionists have been drinking in Socialism ever since. Where hundreds attended meetings organised by the Indepentent Labour Party before, thousands do so now, and at all these meetings they hear Socialism preached. The more vigorous the Socialism, the more the Trade Unionists applaud.

And if, on the part of the Socialists, the new alliance with the Trade Unionists implied an act of faith, it is no less true to say that to Trade Unionism it involved a self-revelation. Unionism had been the school of democracy, in which two million men and women had been trained for the common life. They had been but dimly conscious, for the most part, of what a mighty instrument was the solidarity they had painfully created. But the fact that the Trade Union Congress invited Socialist organisations to join the new party it created, while excluding all other political bodies not confined to the working class, showed that organised Labour had gone far to realise its own inner purpose and power. The Trade Unions had found, by the experience of the last six years, that the idealism of the Independent Labour Party never prevented its

members from lending active assistance in all the difficulties of Trade Unionism itself. They discovered that the formal alliance of Trade Unionism and Socialism was only a recognition of facts. Both the Socialists and those Trade Unionists who dissented from the alliance, or wished to include other middle-class, non-Socialist bodies, were alike thinking the thoughts of a time already dead. Only in a Labour Party, dealing with practical politics as they were brought to the surface by the pressure of contemporary need, and enlightened from within by a living contact with Socialism, could the progress of democracy be assured.

CHAPTER VI

POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS

THE foregoing sketch of the history of the Political Labour movement would not be complete without some attempt to estimate the powers and possibilities of the new party. The nation has become aware, by the startling evidence of the general and recent bye-elections, that there are a large number of constituencies, in the North of England, at least, where the Labour Party can hold its own in a contest with either or both of the older parties. Till lately, quite unaware of the movement that has been going on for so many years, this revelation has, in some quarters, resulted in a kind of terror almost hysterical in expression. Probably much of this terror is affected; but there is enough to prove that, so soon after Labour has become conscious of itself, Society is becoming conscious of the power and purpose of Labour. Those who, only lately, were prepared to prophesy the speedy collapse of the movement, are now fearful of its early triumph. Society, as at present constituted, is engaged in a life and death struggle for its very existence with a rapidly growing Socialist Party. Such, at least, seems to be the opinion of those who recently hardly knew there was a Socialist movement at all.

Neither past confidence nor present terror rest on any real understanding of what has happened. The Trade Unionists, as a class, have indeed realised that they must not seek for future progress in entangling alliances with established parties, controlled and financed by the very men with whom they have to fight their industrial battles. Wherever Trade Unionism is strong, in the industrial centres of Scotland and the North, a Labour Party candidate has always a strong chance of success. Nor can he very well be too extreme for the stomach of these constituencies. At the General Election of 1906, while such strong organisations as the Boiler Makers failed to gain a single seat, the candidates put forward by the definitely Socialist Independent Labour Party were all successful. The average elector in our manufacturing towns, whether himself a Socialist or not, has no fear of Socialism. Even of districts like that of Colne Valley, where Trade Unionism is weak, there are many where the propaganda of the Independent Labour Party has created a vote large enough to win.

Nevertheless it is probable that, in the main, the power of Labour-Socialism is at present limited by the extent of Trade Unionism and its influence on other workmen. Socialism, it must be remembered, is not mainly a critical, it is a constructive force; its possible progress is conditioned at every step by the growth of organisations within the social fabric itself. However, the idealist may construct *in vacuo*, so to speak, his conception of a perfect state, he can only translate

so much of his dream into fact as the people are educated and organised to do. Industrial organisation must precede political organisation, just as political democracy must precede social democracy —that, if anything, is the lesson to be derived from the history of British Socialism from the days of Robert Owen to our own. The people must gain a mastery over small things before they can administer great. While the State may grant facilities, it is the people who must act. Socialism cannot be imposed from without; it must be created from within.

This is not to say that, in any constituency, the Labour vote is necessarily limited to the Trade Unionists. Trade Unionism is very weak in Norwich, yet Mr. Roberts, a member of the Independent Labour Party, is now the senior member for that city. But where Trade Unionism exists at all, it receives, in a way perhaps not always understood, the leadership of the working class, Unionist and non-Unionist alike. As the magnetism of the Socialists within their ranks infects the Unionists, so that of the organised workers infects the more lethargic non-Unionists. Trade Unionism must be strong enough in any constituency to have a powerful, direct or indirect influence on the workers, if the Labour Party is to have a good fighting chance; it by no means follows that the majority of the workers must be organised.

With the exception of the Miners' Unions, the new party already covers the greater part of the Trade Union world; even including the miners, it covers nearly one-half. The adhesion of the

miners, too, a class already strongly infected with Socialism, can only be a question of time;[1] and when they are affiliated, any Unions that remain outside will be mere survivals of the past. Yet it cannot be said that Trade Unionism is thoroughly converted. In some Unions and many places the men are really enthusiastic, but that is because they have come within the influence of the Independent Labour Party and its insistent propaganda. Less obviously, these are generally also the places where not only Trade Unionism, but Co-operation, has made most progress, and the teachings of Socialism have been driven home by the object-lesson of industry actually carried on on principles largely Socialistic. The London Trade Unionists are but little touched by the movement; and if they were, have probably far less influence in forming the opinions of the non-Unionists around them than their comrades in the manufacturing districts. As a political force of first-rate importance, the Labour-Socialist alliance will probably for some time be confined to the great provincial towns and industrial counties of England and Scotland. Within its own district, its progress will probably be very rapid and complete. It would not be at all surprising to find that, in a very few years, the domination of Labour in the working-class contituencies of many counties is as complete as Nationalism in Connaught or Orangeism through-

[1] Since writing the above, several of the Miners' Unions have become affiliated, and it seems likely more will have done so ere this sees the light.

out a great part of Ulster, where it is mere waste of money for any candidate on the unpopular side to contest. It is not merely a Labour ascendency, but virtual unanimity in favour of Labour that we may soon expect in those seats where the party has already got a strong hold. In the northern towns, it is not too much to expect, that the working classes will very soon be as completely "Labour" as in Ireland they are Nationalist. But there are many other constituencies, for as yet Trade Unionism and Co-operation are very far from covering the field of British industry. There are three million Co-operators and two million Trade Unionists, but the manual Labour classes number fourteen million or thereabouts. Among these, the minority of organised workers are scattered in very different proportions in the various districts. In the county of Durham, for instance, 11 per cent. of the whole, and of course a very much larger proportion of the adult male, population are Trade Unionists; in the whole county of Dorset, Mr. and Mrs. Webb estimate, there are only about 300 people thus organised. It is manifest that so small a number cannot do anything towards organising and financing contests in Dorset. In such a place, it would be exceedingly difficult to organise an "I.L.P." group, for few of the working-men can have any practical experience of the work of organisation. Mr. Joseph Arch made a brave effort to organise the agricultural workers, and there is at the present moment an Agricultural Labourers' Union which, I believe, does good work in Norfolk.

But the conditions of life on the farm are so different from those in the factory, that it may well be doubted whether Trade Unionism, as we understand it, is possible there. The weekly or fortnightly branch meeting, at which business is decided and subscriptions paid after work hours, is the centre of effective Trade Unionism. This meeting presupposes three things: The ability to pay a subscription of some sort among those of the members employed; a time for knocking off work, after which the workman is free; and a population living sufficiently close to one another to be able to meet frequently in one place. None of these things can be asserted of the farm labourers. They are scattered far and wide over the country; their hours are dictated, not by the regular movements of machinery, but by exigencies of nature, and they are yet, in the South at least, so desperately poor that every penny they earn is generally required for the immediate calls of life. Again, the personal liberty of the townsman, outside the hours of his daily work, is far greater than that of the rural labourer. After work hours, the town employer takes no interest in, and has no knowledge of, what his men are doing. He does not care to know, and could not find out if he did, what the individuals in such a mass do with their leisure time. The farmer is in much more intimate touch with his few hands. He is often narrowly conservative and hostile to Labour, and would soon know and promptly resent the first attempts at independent action on the part of any of them.

I doubt very much, then, the possibility of really effective and permanent Trade Unionism in the rural districts, at least under present conditions. But, if the conditions of successful Trade Unionism are absent, the essential basis of Unionism, as of every other form of human association, including society itself, the need for co-operation, for "mutual aid," to use Kropotkin's phrase, applies as much to the rural labourer as to anyone. Trade Unionism as it is, is the concrete result of a long struggle to meet a specialised form of this need, a struggle waged under definite conditions, by men having definite opportunities. The spirit of association, compelled to work in the material supplied to it by the conflicting interests and passions of modern industry, has produced this thing, the exact model of which could not have been created by any other possible combination whatsoever. Given a basis from which to work, the secular pressure of common need, which is binding men everywhere into associations for mutual aid, can work just as well in the material supplied by rural as by factory life. The form, the phenomenal expression, may well be very different, but the essential spirit will be the same. What is wanted is something to free the spirit of association in the rural districts, as the repeal of the Corn Laws and the Factory Acts freed it in the towns; when, we may be sure, whether they form Trade Unions after the town model or not, the rural labourers will certainly combine. Leaving this part of my subject for a later chapter, it is only needful for my present purpose to recognise that, in rural

constituencies, the industrial organisation on which, as we have seen, political organisation should be based, does not as yet exist. In the future this may be altered; but for the present it is probable enough the purely rural constituencies may remain the preserves of the older parties—of the Liberals, if they are wise enough to press forward a really helpful land policy; of the Tories, if their rivals offer nothing to make it worth while to brave the displeasure of the squire. But there are other types of constituency where Labour is not likely to make much impression.

The existing form of society has, of course, brought into being a large number of callings which presuppose its existence. The number of domestic servants and other immediate dependants upon the rich covers a very large portion of the fourteen millions of manual workers. Closer to actual poverty than their masters, these people, to a very great extent, share their outlook on life, while they are very largely detached from the influence of Trade Union feeling. Then there are the centres of military and naval influence, and, above all other places, there is London. Cobbett's designation of the "wen of England" is only too true of London, a city which is very largely indeed of parasitic growth. The extent to which its vast populations depend upon the centralisation of art, fashion, politics, and speculation in one given district requires a more complete analysis than I can give it here; but it is probable that, were London reduced to its natural size, to dependence upon its own convenience as a port and a manufacturing centre, it might not greatly exceed

such a city as Glasgow or Liverpool. But the very size of London tells against its acceptance of any new ideal. Where people move in circles each almost unconscious of the others' existence, an idea may spread very far and convert many thousands without exercising any practical influence on the electorate. Thus, London Trade Unionism, though not particularly backward, exercises very little of the influence on the minds of the generality of workers that it does in the provinces. It seems to me almost impossible to get so closely into touch with the minds of the bulk of the London workers as the Independent Labour Party has already done with those of the manufacturing districts. There are scores of public meetings, addressed by such men as Mr. Philip Snowden, in the towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire, every year, which number anything from two to five thousand; and this, not only when "politics are on," at election times or near them, but any day. At a time when neither of the other parties could probably call a thousand people together to hear anyone below the rank of a Cabinet Minister, I have seen crowds ranged outside the doors of a large theatre, waiting patiently to hear Mr. Ramsey Macdonald or Mr. Grayson. Popular speakers have all their dates booked for years ahead, and even the minor lights of the movement are worried by invitations innumerable to speak about Socialism. But it is not the size of these meetings nor their effect upon the immediate hearers that matters. A lecture by Mr. Snowden, in a provincial town, is an event of some importance; his coming is

announced beforehand on every hoarding, and his speech is well reported in the local press next day. The people who hear it are a sufficient proportion of the total population to reappear in little groups next morning in every workshop in the town; and are sufficiently delighted with what they have heard to ensure that the principal topic on Monday among the working classes, after Saturday's football match, shall be Sunday's Socialist lecture. Of course, nothing of the sort is possible in London. Even the largest audience would be scattered hopelessly next morning among workmates who had never heard of the meeting, and were not at all wishful to learn what had happened at it. The London daily press might mention the matter, but would certainly not report it, and the whole affair would leave no impression on the public mind. On the whole, it seems likely that London may continue the battleground of the older parties, until, perhaps, the reform of the Land Laws begins to transform London itself from without, and this vast congregation of cities, piled together by the centralising forces of the nineteenth century, begins to disperse itself slowly again under the contrary influences of the twentieth. The spectacle of an organised Labour Party continually fighting for the poor in the House of Commons will, no doubt, have a good deal of influence; but, on the whole, London is likely to be one of the last places converted to Labourism.

In the purely country districts, in London, and in those divisions of the larger cities inhabited by

middle-class people, we should not expect the Labour Party to make much impression, for some time at least. In industrial England, in the manufacturing towns and mining county-divisions, its growth will bear a close relation to the strength or weakness of Trade Unionism. In seaport towns,[1] it will probably be, on the whole, less successful than in purely manufacturing and mining centres; while its progress may sometimes be arrested, as at present in Birmingham, by the local popularity of some prominent member of another party, or by some special peculiarity of the place. Where Trade Unionism is strong, however, and where the ground has been prepared by a vigorous and capable Socialist propaganda, Labour, as I have hinted, will probably establish a novelty in English politics—the absolute, unquestioned ascendency of one party. The day is not far distant when, in scores of places, both the municipal and parliamentary elections will be absolutely controlled by Labour, and where some extremist, discontented with the constitutional methods of the new party, will probably stand a better chance of election than an "orthodox" Liberal or Tory. Recognising fully its limitations in extent, the appearance of the new party is a tremendous event in British politics. The thirty-two members of Parliament who now owe allegiance to it are admittedly a great influence, out of all proportion to their numbers, in the House of Commons. But

[1] Because of the floating nature of the population. A factory or a colliery is easy to permeate with Socialism because of the frequency with which men meet. The above was written before the comparative failures of Labour at Liverpool and Hull confirmed its truth.

though a combination of the other parties against them at the next General Election, while certainly rousing resentment among the working classes and increasing the Labour vote, might very readily reduce the numerical strength of the group in the next Parliament, its practical power is morally certain to be even greater; while a few years more of the present propaganda should make it proof against any possible combination in the borough constituencies. The very size of the present Liberal majority, as well as the moral paralysis that has struck Toryism, prevents the Labour Party exercising anything like the influence they would on a Government dependent on their votes, and faced by an Opposition in some way in touch with the thought of the day. The Conservative party had become hypnotised into the belief that England had become reactionary; it has not yet been able to effect any working compromise with the spirit of the twentieth century. No doubt it will, ere long, clear itself of "Tariff Reform" and other vexed questions that promote schism in the ranks of property. Some new Beaconsfield, cleansing his party of mere reaction, will again successfully appeal to the "harassed interests," and Conservatism will become a living thing. When it does, the old balance of power will be restored, and Labour, with a compact and growing group entrenched in the House of Commons, will stand as umpire between the parties. We are probably near the day when no party can hope to command a clear majority over all others, and Labour should exercise a vastly greater power in future Parliaments than in the present. The modifi-

cation of the party system, threatened since the rise of Nationalism, will soon be an accomplished fact, when the methods and temper of Parliament itself will be profoundly changed.

It remains to be considered for what the new party stands. How far are the terms "Labour" and "Socialism," as a matter of fact, interchangeable? To contend that the majority, or even a considerable minority, of the Trade Unionists are Socialists, in the sense that William Morris was a Socialist, would be absurd. Socialists of that type have finally cut themselves adrift from all the ideals and peculiar prejudices of their age. In the spirit, though not in the body, they live in the Socialism of the future, sharing its aims and aspirations, and those alone. The Trade Unionists are essentially English men and women of the twentieth century, taking part with zest in its struggles, and interested in its progressive ideals. They feel where the shoe pinches, and are striving everywhere for the removal of immediate and pressing evils. There is, it is true, a strong leaven of idealism; but even the idealists are closely in touch with contemporary fact. From this they derive their influence on more matter-of-fact companions. It is, as we have seen, because the Independent Labour Party man is practically useful to the Trade Unionist in the everyday battle of life that the latter listens patiently to what he has to say about the future.

But, in a very real sense, the Labour Party is Socialist. The unity of the party does not come from its machinery, effective as that has shown itself

to be, but from the common spirit that animates its members in a greater or lesser degree, from Mr. Keir Hardie down to the humblest labourer within its ranks. There is a natural hierarchy of ability and knowledge, but there is an essential unity of sympathy. The party is woven of one stuff throughout; and if it is composed of Socialist and Trade Unionist bodies, at no place is it possible to say, among the individual members, where the Trade Unionist ends and the Socialist begins. While as yet only a minority are avowed Socialists, there is no objection to Socialism anywhere; while practically all the Unionists are in favour of the immediate political implications of Socialism. They are prepared to treat all the practical social questions of the day exactly as the Socialist would treat them, even if they have not made up their minds upon all the issues that may become practical politics in the days of our grandchildren.

Indeed, the Trade Unionists' politics reach far beyond the immediate present. It may with confidence be stated that ninety-nine Unionists out of a hundred would assent to such a programme as this:

1. State provision of work for the unemployed at a "living" wage.

2. State provision of Old Age Pensions.

3. Legal limitation of the hours of labour to a maximum of eight per day.

4. Free universal and secular[1] education, ele-

[1] The Irish members of the unions would, no doubt, object to this.

mentary, secondary, technical, and university, to all who desire to avail themselves of it.

5. The adequate feeding of school children, wherever necessary, at the public cost.

6. The nationalisation of the Land, Mines, and Railways.

7. The abolition of all indirect taxes, except perhaps those on liquor, and the substitution of heavily graduated duties on incomes and estates.

8. The municipal ownership of electric power and tramways, as also of water, gas, and other monopolies.

9. Municipal supplies of bread, milk, and coal.

These, with such political reforms as adult suffrage, equal electoral districts, payment of members, Home Rule all round, and the abolition of the House of Lords, are things about which the party is virtually unanimous. Even if the party were now, or were soon to be, in office, instead of in a small minority, it will perhaps be admitted that they are enough to keep it occupied for a long time to come, without danger of internal discord; at least until the Socialist missionaries, possessed as they are of the confidence of their Trade Union colleagues, have had time to convert them to their own more extensive ideals.

It would be well, perhaps, to explore that uncertain borderland that lies between the more fully conscious Socialists and the bulk of the party. The new member of the Independent Labour Party pledges him- or herself to the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange.

He is thus committed to the whole programme of contemporary Socialism; but in definitely joining this party within a party, it does not always follow that he has adopted any new opinion, or even very greatly changed his ideal of life. Very probably the opening of a new branch at a more convenient distance from his home, the excitement aroused by a successful election, or the persuasions of a friend have led to an avowal of opinions held for long. The younger members of the Independent Labour Party, probably nearly all the members of many branches, differ practically nothing in opinion from thousands of Trade Unionists outside the Independent Labour Party—they have signed their names to a declaration of a common belief, that is all.

Starting, as all must, with the common formula of nationalisation, however, the Socialism of the Independent Labour man or woman is, like human life, a becoming and not a being. The young Trade Unionist who joins a vigorous I.L.P. branch finds himself exposed to educational influences, of which at first he had probably no conception. During the summer, the branch holds weekly open-air meetings, at which the speeches are chiefly devoted to the general advocacy of Socialism and the direct representation of Labour, or to criticism of current local and national politics from a Socialistic standpoint. To have heard half a dozen of these speeches is to have heard them all, though sometimes a great speaker may deliver the common message with unusual force and eloquence. When the winter comes round, however, the members retire into their own

club-rooms, except when, on great occasions, some theatre or large hall is taken for one of the leading speakers of the movement. The club-rooms become, for six or seven months, a veritable school of economics, ethics, often of literature and handicraft. The novice will find himself surrounded by a body of men and women, who differ from the ordinary working people around them, as he in time will come to differ, chiefly in having become accustomed to discuss and study ideas on every variety of subject. He will hear papers on Mazzini or Emerson, on Edward Carpenter and Ruskin. Gradually he will become aware of his own lack of culture, become interested in the thoughts of his fellow Socialists; and if—it is rather a big "if"—the actual work of the movement, speaking, selling literature, working on committees, canvassing, and so on, does not take up all his time, he will soon have as thorough an education in modern life and politics as it is perhaps possible to get. If he has a ready gift of speech, he will become unusually well informed about public affairs, and will be greatly admired by his comrades; but he will profit less by the atmosphere of ideas into which he has been introduced than the more silent members. What he has done in joining the Independent Labour Party is, not to pass from Individualism to Socialism—hundreds and thousands of Trade Unionists have done that already—so much as to transcend the region of purely material Socialism, the Socialism that can be defined by formulas and set down in programmes, and to join the spiritual fellowship of Socialism itself, the fellowship

that touches and colours, not politics only, but the whole of life.

In a very real sense the Independent Labour Party may be called the "soul of the Labour movement," but it is a soul in living touch with the body of Trade Unionism. If a member of the Independent Labour Party is qualified for membership of any Trade Union, the rules of the party compel him to join the Union also. Middle-class Socialists, or those workmen whose trades are unorganised, are of course welcome to join; and bringing, as they do, a different life experience and often higher culture to the common stock, such members tend to widen the general conception of Socialism. From the first, the party has included many women, and their presence has been invaluable. Without its numerous women, indeed, actively taking part in its counsels and its work, it would have been impossible for the party to have remained democratic in any real sense of the word. The equality of the sexes might have been retained as a theory; it would certainly not have been felt as a fact.

The non-Unionist members of an Independent Labour Party branch, then, aid in shaping its general attitude to life; but it is through its Trade Unionist members that it retains its remarkable touch with the Labour Party. These are, for the most part, the most active Trade Unionists in their respective branches, on the work and temper of which they exert a powerful influence. They act as media for the interchange of thought and feeling between the two

sections of the movement, as threads by which theoretic and organic Socialism in England are bound together. They convey the inspiration of the Socialist to their fellow-workmen; they prevent any danger of Socialism losing touch with the actual by their constant contact with every phase of the contemporary conflict between Capital and Labour. These men understand the people, because they are of the people; and as their insight into Socialism grows, there is little danger of it ever becoming the Socialism of the *doctrinaire*. They are free from the besetting sin of the "intellectuals" of all ages, the contempt of the people, which says, "This people that knoweth not the law is accursed."

If, then, the Labour Party as a whole has only a material and mechanical conception of Socialism, it is already provided with a valuable machinery for education. The British are not a people of ideas. Probably the Trade Unionist will always take his politics from pamphlets and speeches, rather than from exhaustive works beyond the reach of his leisure or his purse; but it is certain now, through whatever medium he gets them, his politics will be supplied by the Socialists. As the Trade Unionists become willing to entertain new ideas, they will assuredly be supplied with them, not by the writers of the *Daily Mail*, but by men like Mr. Philip Snowden and Mr. Robert Blatchford. Possibly it might be better if they studied Hegel or even Karl Marx, but the culture they will get from these more popular leads is genuine enough. The men who lead the workers, who at last have got their ears, now that

the khaki fury has subsided, are serious students, at least of the questions with which they deal. From them the workers will get a culture which, imperfect as it may be, is contemporary and alive. Perhaps within it are contained the germs of a new thought, a new art, a new literature, as well as the promise of a new politics.

CHAPTER VII

CONTEMPORARY SOCIALISTIC TENDENCIES

I HAVE now traced the evolution of Labour-Socialism in England up to the union of organic, at least the form of it known as Trade Unionism, and theoretic Socialism. I have endeavoured to estimate the possibilities of the party as a fighting force in politics, and perhaps enough has been said to convince the reader that Socialism will influence parties and legislation greatly in the near future. Before closing this section of the book, however, and endeavouring to suggest some of the probable, near and more distant, effects of this new influence, it would be well to examine briefly those allied movements in contemporary thought and life that have aided in preparing the ground for Socialism. Before we can estimate the probable influence of a party, we must study, not only the party itself, but its environment, the forces consciously or unconsciously aiding or resisting it. Even if a great movement is to succeed at last, it must, in England at any rate, in this home of compromise, pass through many stages; in each of which the actual position of affairs will be a compromise between the forces of attack and defence, between the movement itself and the conservatism to which

it is opposed. The existing compromise, at any given moment, will be an unstable one, constantly tending to give way to one more favourable to the attack; but it will be years, perhaps centuries, before the resistance of the reaction will be finally overcome. The progress of a movement involving so vast a change as that from capital privately owned to capital socially owned, from industrial competition to industrial co-operation, will be fast or slow, even possible or impossible, according as the general tendencies of thought and industry are working in the same direction or otherwise. When the State was confiscating the funds of the parishes, enclosing the common lands, enforcing the Combination Laws, or hiring out pauper children to be done to death in the factories, the tone of contemporary thought was entirely congruous with the action of the State. The coming of individualism in politics was contemporary with that of individualism in religion. The dominant idea of the mediæval Church was Catholic unity; that of Protestantism, individual salvation. The organisation of the parish, including all within its boundaries, gave way before that of the congregation, embracing only those of a particular sect. The separation between sacred and secular became much more marked; and even the elect were generally associated only for religious purposes, and felt very little a common duty to aid one another in temporal troubles. As the borough corporations became narrow oligarchies, and Parliament, before the sweeping away of the rotten boroughs, passed

more and more into the hands of the landlords, the control of the villagers over their own secular and religious affiairs became less and less. The utterly undemocratic tone of eighteenth-century literature, its contempt for the people, reflected the undemocratic spirit of the society in which it flourished, a society in which the poor were merely objects of contemptuous pity or oppression.

The currents and cross-currents of the humanitarian spirit during the last hundred and fifty years would be as curious a subject of sociological study as the complex creations of the primary need for co-operation and "mutual aid." As the one was primarily due to spiritual and the other to practical needs, the humanitarian spirit is most manifested in the world of ideas, the necessity for "mutual aid" in that of things. Yet they curiously overlap and often conflict, the spiritual with the practical. In their turn, various manifestations of the spiritual fellowship engage in blind struggle; one creation of the practical overlaps and conflicts with another. Only the thread of their common purpose, the secular process driving men, with or against their will, to mutual co-operation and spiritual fellowship, can enable us to reduce the maze of conflicting movements within society to a common order, to predict which out of the many are likely to survive, and which to fail.

The coming humanitarian spirit was perhaps first manifested in a crude, somewhat sentimental individualism. Methodism revolts against materialism

in religion; Rousseau idealises the moral virtues of the savage; Clarkson and Wilberforce denounce the slave trade; Howard demands sympathy for the horrors of our prisons. As yet there is no thought of reconstruction. These reformers are fighting against existing evils; they have little conception of positive good. With Owenism and the Factory Act movement, however, we are on firmer ground; and we get, the conception at least, of social action for constructive purposes. The humanitarianism of the revolutionary poets is fervent, but, for the most part, anarchic; and Shelley, who has been an inspiration to many, has been a guide to none. The movements personified by Newman and Maurice were, essentially reactionary as the first appeared, of the newer order. They both aimed at a revival of spiritual life on an organic, not a purely individual basis. Maurice perceived the co-operative character of society; Newman led the way to an understanding of the interdependence of age on age, and initiated a movement possibly destined, alike to spiritualise, and to communise art.

These men, however, effected little outside the churches; both for good and evil, Carlyle had a far greater influence in forming the thought of the age. His vigorous powers of abuse were freely used against the theory of commercial individualism, the "cash nexus" conception of politics. In this way he gave inspiration to many; but the actual value of his disciples' aid to progress was generally in inverse ratio to the permanence of Carlyle's own influence over them. From Carlyle, through Froude

and Kingsley, has come down to us whatever moral sanction can be given to the materialistic Imperialism of the nineties. More nearly related to the creative forces of the age was the work of Matthew Arnold. It was his mission to do, to some extent, for the average educated man, what Maurice did for the cultured Churchman. The vein of irony in his essays was an admirable weapon for freeing the children of the rich middle-classes from the stolid self-satisfaction of their fathers. Gently he insinuated an organic conception of life into their minds, and liberated his readers from the tyranny of commercialism. It was he that introduced to England that useful word "Philistine," a word which, though touched with the snobbery of culture, has been singularly effective in breaking up the general faith in "administrative nihilism" common fifty years ago. The defect of all these men and movements was a want of touch with the common people, the need for which indeed Maurice was perhaps the only one to realise. They affected chiefly the educated few, having little influence with the unintelligent majority, even of the upper and middle classes. Their mission was to deprive the Early Victorian conception of life and politics of intellectual prestige, of the support of the more thoughtful spirits. But it cannot be said that, in the aggregate, their influence amounted to much. Commercial society is a poor soil in which to sow the seeds of constructive life. Not rooted in the common people, and thus divorced from actual contact with contemporary need, these first growths of a changed spirit "lacked deepness of earth." The

idea of construction became disseminated in society, but in a vague and conflicting manner, when *The Origin of Species* threw every current conception of life into confusion. Painfully the various schools of thinkers were compelled to readjust their ideas to the new knowledge of the world.

Gradually this process of adjustment went on. Christian and Atheist, whatever their predispositions, began to realise that all sound theories of ethics and economics, all systems of politics, must be brought into harmony with the law of evolution. Laws and conventions of property ceased to have an absolute sanction in some ideal justice, but must justify themselves, if at all, by their relation to the social needs of the time. Before such a test *doctrinaire* Individualism broke down, as it was already breaking down, before the changing facts of society itself. In truth, the individualistic theorist, the "Philosophic Radical," had rather a sorry experience during the Victorian Era. The network of theory by which he had justified competition and individualism was being torn through everywhere; nowhere was it strong enough to contain the stubborn facts of the age. No sooner had the horrors of child labour in the factories compelled the economist to admit the necessity for legislative interference, than he was invited, by the prevalence of the adulteration of food stuffs, to decide whether he preferred to be poisoned according to theory, or to preserve his life by an Act of the Legislature. On the whole, in spite of Mr. Bright, he decided that, whether "only another form of competition" or not, the adulteration of food stuffs

must be prevented; and he even deferred to officialism so far as to admit of the periodical inspection of weights and measures. The doctrine of *caveat emptor* having thus gone by the board, the economist then found himself forced to adjust his system so as to admit of the established fact of Trade Unionism. Few theories were more popular with economists in the early days of Trade Unionism than that of the "wages fund," the idea that there was only a certain sum available for wages every year, and that, if one man or section of men succeeded in raising their wages above the average, those of the remaining labourers must be correspondingly depressed. Economists had placed this theory at the service of capitalists engaged in disputes with unconvinced Trade Unionists without much effect. Men do not submit to low wages because of reasons, however ingenious, but because of force. The Unions continued to raise wages, in spite of scientific theory, till ultimately every reputable economist was compelled to surrender the idea. True, they did so in approved *a priori* style; but I have little doubt the influence of contemporary facts had much to do with the change. Even now, the wages fund theory often reappears in disputes between masters and men. It is far too useful a justification for refusing a rise in wages for capitalists to surrender it, merely because their fickle allies, the economists, have deserted them. It is amusing to hear an employer, who probably never looked into an economic text-book in his life, assuring his workmen that their demands are against "the eternal laws of political economy," on

the strength of a theory, which Mill and everyone who followed him gave up long ago. The economic reading, either of the average workman or average employer, is not great; but often the delegates of the men, who conduct their negotiations for them, have some acquaintance with the subject. A fair proportion of them nowadays have been correspondents of Ruskin College, or attended a class in economics; a few are real authorities. The probability is, however, that none of the members of a Trade Unionist deputation can answer the employer's dogmatism. He comes off unconfuted because of the very antiquity of his ideas. The workmen, whose reading, if any, has probably been confined to more up-to-date text-books, have very likely never even heard of the wages fund, and cannot understand what their employer is talking about.

The theory of the innate wickedness of all governments was at the same time receiving many a rude shock. There was, of course, much to justify such an assumption in eighteenth-century politics. The governments, local and national, of Europe were all virtually survivals of a bygone age. They were, for the most part, extravagant, quarrelsome, grossly incompetent, and corrupt in all questions that concerned the well-being of the people. If all governments were like that of modern Russia, or even like that of Georgian England, administrative nihilism would probably be very widely popular now. The Municipal Reform Act of 1835, however, had created a new local government in England,

whose traditions were those of the nineteenth century itself, which was far less corrupt, far more alive to the direct pressure of contemporary life, than the national Government. The average town councillor fitted very badly into the individualistic theory of things. Plato desired that "kings should be philosophers and philosophers kings," but even his idealism would hardly have contemplated a borough council of aldermen and councillors drawn from the Academy! Our local governors are often very excellent people, but they are not philosophers, either individualist or Platonic. The outfit of the best of them consists of two things—common sense and a genuine wish to be useful. The good councillor really wishes to serve his city, and is only too glad to find any new way in which he can do so, and help to preserve for it a satisfactory position in the race for municipal progress. He wants to have a better town hall, better parks, better streets, and better sanitation than rival cities can show. His reading is practical and technical, not theoretic; he is anxious to destroy the germs of disease, to develop the schools, in every way to enlarge the sphere and increase the efficiency of the body of which he is a member. He has a human and entirely pardonable pride in himself and his office. The one idea he has steadfastly resisted, fortunately for progress, is that a borough councillor is an unimportant person, who can do nothing well for the people, and, in consequence, should do as little as possible. He objects to his "sphere" being defined too closely, and quite rightly. His sphere is to serve the town in every

way he can, to seek out new ways to make himself useful, not to find arguments for leaving unsatisfactory things as they are. A borough corporation that consulted the writings of the late Mr. Auberon Herbert to find out reasons why it should leave an epidemic alone, would be intolerable, were it not, fortunately, impossible.

Nor would an exponent of philosophic Nihilism stand much chance of election to any council. The candidate who came before the electors with the statement that he could do little for them that they could not do better for themselves, who gave, as his election address, a summary of the principles laid down in *The Man* versus *The State*, would certainly be rejected at the poll. A policy of doing nothing is not an inspiring ideal, and will never be popular with the masses. It seems a sad commentary on democracy that any local tradesman would probably have had a better chance of serving on a borough council than Herbert Spencer. But the electors, in preferring a tradesman who wished to make himself useful over the nihilist philosopher would be perfectly right; in selecting the worse thinker they would be choosing the better councillor.

But while the philosopher alderman is probably impossible and certainly undesirable, it is perhaps not out of place for us to philosophise a little about our borough rulers. The first thing essential to the survival of any organism is the will to live. Nature would make short work of any new plant or animal which had not enough life force to struggle for its existence and development. It is the same with

new features in the social organism. Within the body politic, institutions struggle for existence as do plants and animals outside of it, and, within as without, one thing, always present and essential to success, is "the will to live." Effete institutions do not dissolve themselves; they must be suppressed or transformed from without.

Now, local government in England, recreated by the Act of 1835, had a very decided "will to live." It was in daily contact, not with current scholasticism, but with life; and the only means by which it could satisfy its "will to live" was by a steadily increasing and expanding efficiency in dealing with sanitation, educution, recreation, and ultimately of housing and what is called "municipal trading." The consequence was a constantly growing series of contradictions between *doctrinaire* individualism and fact. When the theory of governmental incompetence was predominant everywhere, untheoretic aldermen and councillors were discovering that they must govern the cholera or it would govern them. From without, when they were slack in doing their duty, by means of a code of sanitary laws and Local Government Board Orders; from within, when the people and their representatives were more thoroughly alive to it, the new corporations were urged on to explode the theories of *laissez faire* by facts. In numberless ways, the flood of municipalism began to overflow the narrow "sphere" appointed to it by theory. As in the case of Trade Unionism, the discomfited philosophers were compelled to pick up the floating fragments of theory, and re-erect

them at a further distance from the rising tide, only to see them again flung down by a new advance. Nowhere is the importance of urban sanitation now denied; hardly anywhere, outside of London, is there any serious opposition to the public ownership of city monopolies; a municipal supply of milk, which is certainly not a monopoly, has already many advocates. The theory of *laissez faire* has been gradually replaced by a practical policy of betterment, not guided by any particular theory, but by public utility.

It is no use building theoretic boundaries round the sphere either of public or private action; such limitations, however logical, are purely arbitrary and artificial. An energetic community, an energetic personality, will be continually transcending any such theoretic limits. As the enterprising tradesman adds department after department to his own original business, as Napoleon set at naught the canons of war, winning victory after victory in defiance of them, so a growing civic spirit will achieve successes in numberless directions in which academic logic has *proved* that it must fail. Civilisation grows, not by philosophic theory, but by enthusiasm and experiment.

The theory of the innate evil of public management has, in the course of the last generation, very largely decayed. This, when we come to think of it, is an unconscious tribute to democracy; for only during the last generation have the people had any influence over public management. The forces checking municipal expansion have been driven to substitute for

an ordered system of individualistic thought a frank defence of private interests as such, not intellectual at all, but merely obstructive. This is the "moderate" policy of the London County Council. In so far as this is successful at all, it is of course a serious stay to progress in the visible, but it is even more injurious in the moral, world. "Give a dog a bad name and hang him" is a homely saying, equally applicable in public as in private affairs. Were it possible for the opponents of civic progress really to stop the exterior manifestations of the new enthusiasm, we may be sure they would, ere long, destroy the enthusiasm also. The communal spirit grows by action; it cannot breathe in a vacuum. As the powers of man become feeble by disuse, so do those of the body politic. Love cannot live without love; the artist grows in power and insight by the practice of art; ever the inner and spiritual is wedded to the outer and visible world. If we really could—hard task!—persuade "Mr. Mayor" and his colleagues that they were very ineffective people, only interesting on festival days, they, we may depend upon it, would rapidly become what we so unkindly thought them. As the practice of civic betterment died out, so, alike in the people and their governors, would die the public spirit from which it sprung. The mayors of garden-parties and presentation addresses would succeed the ardent civic statesmen whom we had snubbed. Municipal elections would become infrequent and be feebly contested; and councillors and aldermen would value their offices mainly as names and not as things. The policy of the London

Moderates, as of their like in other places, means more than a reversion to the practices of the Metropolitan Board of Works ; it strikes, through its external manifestations, at the growing civic spirit of London. The more any city council undertakes to do, the better, as a rule, it will do it; for much would not be undertaken unless the spirit that leads to well-doing were there. The more readily a corporation consents to leave much undone, the worse it will do the remainder.

Next to, perhaps equal with, the Trade Union and Co-operative movements, I place the growth of municipal Socialism, as an influence from the outside world modifying the tone of contemporary thought. Not less important than these has been the steady tendency towards the concentration of industry. The Industrial Revolution profoundly altered the extent to which manufactures generally tended to obey the economic laws of increasing returns. Under handicraft, we had, to a very large extent, an individual unit of production; under machine production, a series of collective units, in a state of unstable equilibrium. To explain what I mean. Since the introduction of machinery, at any one time, in any one trade, it may have been possible to say what amount of capital and labour must be employed to produce goods at a profit; but it is rarely possible to guess what supply of either will be of any use in the early future. Ten years later, some new invention, or the growing organisation of industry generally, may have rendered the original outfit hopelessly inadequate. As the

hand-worker was squeezed out by the first machines of the eighteenth century, so the first capitalist manufacturers were forced to extend their operations, or to succumb before rivals controlling a more effective and concentrated capital. The capitalist with ten thousand pounds, employing a hundred men, disappears or is bought up by the capitalist with a hundred thousand pounds and five hundred men. A ship of a thousand tons was a large one thirty years ago; now such a one will be confined to harbours too shallow for ships of larger draught. New manufactures are starting up every day, frequently in the handicraft stage. They may continue thus, so long as the demand is slight. When the demand grows, however, some machine is invented to save hand-labour; and the rapid progress of evolution begins, which will inevitably bring the whole industry into the hands of some Rockefeller or Pierpont Morgan of the future. There will be no peace of mind for the capitalist who depends for his living on the permanence of any of the intermediate stages between individualism and monopoly. Of late, tariff reformers have pointed to hundreds of disused factories, once prosperous, and have drawn morals about the ill-effects of foreign competition. Frequently the competition has really come from some more highly capitalised and up-to-date home factory, not from the foreigner at all. A dozen factories may be lying idle, while the true inheritor of all their trade is one great concern, seated in the midst of them—not in Germany.

So long as it is possible for any one man, by

acquiring the skill and saving up for the tools of a trade, to compete successfully, the unit of production is individual, and capitalism, properly so called, cannot exist. With the machine, finding work for several hands, and costing more money than the average journeyman can save, the unit of production becomes collective. In order that goods may be put on the market at a low enough price, a number of people must now co-operate together, under some sort of common rule as to hours and so forth, either drawn up by themselves, or imposed on them from without. The amount of capital and the number of hands required to produce goods to sell at the current rate of profit constitute the unit of production for the time being. It may be, and, in the early stages of machine production, generally is, quite small; but in modern industry it has a constant tendency to grow. Not only new inventions in machinery, but, even more, the growth of industrial organisation outside the trade, help this tendency. The owner-captain, travelling from port to port, and negotiating for cargoes, after his arrival finds himself cut out by firms who book their freights by cable in advance. The grocer cannot compete with the syndicated shops, buying wholesale, or with the co-operative stores, drawing their teas from their own plantations in Burmah, or importing their currants, in their own ships, direct from Greece. The small local railway company finds it better to sell out to the North-Eastern or the Midland than to obtain rates over the lines of its larger rival for all goods carried beyond its own narrow district. Large firms buy cheaper, or

manufacture for themselves, the raw materials used by smaller ones, while they own more powerful, effective, and expensive machinery.

Hence it is that the collective unit of effective production, which is the feature of modern industry, unlike the individual units of the past, is, as I said, in a state of unstable equilibrium; it is always giving way before another unit, larger than itself.

This process can only go on, of course, in proportion as there is a real saving in concentration. Taking the Standard Oil Company as a classical instance of the concentration of capital, it must be remembered that the company, however unscrupulous its methods, ousted its rivals only because it actually cheapened production. No doubt, to destroy a dangerous rival, it may often have sold oil below cost price; but the general effect of its monopoly has been, not to increase, but to cheapen the actual price of oil. This it has done by savings on the cost of production, possible only to a firm producing enormous quantities, and of distribution, by means of company-owned tank railway trucks, and other contrivances. With the trade all in its own hands, the company finds it more profitable to do a large trade, at prices lower than the cost of production to a smaller firm, rather than a more moderate one at higher rates. In point of fact, the most economical unit of production, in American oil, at all events, is the whole trade; and when that is the case, no power on earth can prevent the ultimate triumph of monopoly, either public or private.

The capitalist, faced with the forces of modern

industry, finds himself very much in the position of the primeval savage or ancestral ape, who, in the words of Huxley, "created society." Very possibly, his forerunner felt the same preference for "free competition," as opposed to organisation, that he does, so long as free competition gave him an opportunity to eat. But when competition became a choice between being eaten and starvation, the anti-social prejudices of our ancestors gradually gave way. The rigid individualists, who stood out for principle, were duly digested, and became the ancestors of nobody. Faced with the prospect that, however prosperous his business to-day, a larger amalgamation of capital, with better machinery, may make a bankrupt of him in a few years, the capitalist combines, as the Trade Unionist combines, in his own defence. Combination, in the form of large limited companies, marks the progress of national and international industry. Tariff walls facilitate, individualistic prejudices retard, the process, so that it may go on slowly in one country and rapidly in another; but everywhere it advances, forcing each industry to organise itself on the basis of the most effective unit of the moment, whether that be the single workman with his bag of tools, or the trust with its control over the whole trade. The tragedy of the hand-loom weavers is repeated among the men who supplanted them, and will be repeated so long as improvements in the trade continue to make ever larger the size of the most effective unit of production. It is not surprising, then, that the old individualistic outlook of the typical business man tends to disappear. He is

compelled, in England much against his will and often too late, to organise, and the organisation he creates soon becomes stronger than he. He is forced, if not to found a trust, at least to come to a common understanding with his fellows in the trade, to establish a society in which the "war of individual against individual" is "strictly limited."

For a certain, indeed, as we know from our experience of the Christian religion, for a very long time, men may continue to say one thing and do another; but the constant practice of one kind of conduct must nevertheless tend to weaken their belief in its exact opposite. That which to the optimistic capitalists of the fifties was "the life of trade" is "cut-throat competition" to their grandchildren. Rings and trusts may be anti-social in aim, but they are essentially based on the same principles and needs as all other societies. To defend them in practice the methods of the Trade Union must be employed; to support them in argument something of the Socialist's line of thought must be grasped and assimilated.

The modern middle-class man is living in a world that is fast drifting away from its old moorings. Not only is his practice more and more alien to the precepts of his fathers, but the forces of local, and, to a lesser extent, national government, are ever acting contrary to the theories he once accepted. Working-class organisation is no longer an impossible dream; to a large extent, it is an accomplished fact. The drift of literature and thought, of art and religion, is dead against him. There is no clear theory of

individualism, bearing any relation to contemporary facts, to which he can appeal in his defence against the progress of Socialism. Everything tends to leave him to fight his battle without any theoretical justification that will bear a moment's investigation.

It would be easy to overestimate the importance of all this. The new Labour Party would certainly be untrue to its cause if it imagined that capitalistic society would not fight for itself, with or without any theoretic justification. Politics is a warfare of facts, not of theories. No decent theory in defence of chattel slavery is possible, yet it took generations of effort and at least one terrible civil war to end it. The new Labour Party has a long struggle before it, and will know good and evil fortune before, in the long run, it can triumph; and during the whole of its warfare it can count on strenuous resistance. Yet, for all that, it is something that its opponents must fight with a growing consciousness that they are on the wrong side. The old order is dissatisfied with itself, is abandoning its old confidence, is losing the aid of its choicest and most intelligent spirits. The Labour Party emerges on a field of battle ready prepared for it, and if its army be small, at least it has the advantage of the ground and of the light.

PART III

SOCIALISM AND LIFE

CHAPTER I

THE INFLUENCE OF THE LABOUR PARTY

WE have now traced the rise of the Labour Party, and the evolution so far of the Socialist movement in England. Confronted with a definite form of anti-Socialism in modern capitalism, and given the opportunities afforded by virtually manhood suffrage in the modern State, political Socialism entered upon the conquest of English politics. It was necessary, however, for it to become harmonised in method with the peculiar character of the island people among whom it had come; and to evolve a party instrument capable of appealing to the English nation, and speaking a dialect they could comprehend. Only so could ideal Socialism in England become wedded to the unconscious organic movement, tending, blunderingly enough perhaps, but still tending on the whole, towards the unseen goal of Socialism itself. That instrument has been created in the Labour Party, in so far at least as the organised workers of the industrial towns are concerned. A large party vote has grown up, already paramount in at least thirty constituencies, and rapidly growing in many more. The united forces of Trade Unionism and Socialism have appeared in the

House of Commons, in sufficient numbers to affect materially the stability of many parlimentary majorities; and when at least they are in alliance on any point with the Irish Nationalists, to determine to which of the two old parties shall, for the time being, be entrusted the destinies of the nation, except when the Liberal or Conservative majority is as large as that of the present Government.

Let us attempt, then, to estimate the immediate possibilities of the party. It will be evident, in the first instance, that the power of the thirty-two members of the present group would be very small with so large a Liberal majority, unless there were some considerable influence, other than mere numbers or the ability of its members behind it. Already, the Labour group has won some astounding triumphs, if we look only to the number composing it. Formed originally for the immediate purpose of recovering the lost legal rights of Trade Unionists, the Labour Party was naturally discontented with the Trades Disputes Bill of 1906 in the form originally proposed by the Government. Accordingly, the party took the first opportunity to introduce its own Bill, using as its mouthpiece Mr. Walter Hudson, the senior member for Newcastle. The effect was striking enough. The Government, backed as it was by the largest majority ever known, put up a minister to unsay what had been said on its behalf only the day before, and modified its own measure so as exactly to suit the wishes of the Labour men. A party of hundreds virtually obeyed the orders

of less than a tithe of their number, and Labour obtained all it asked.

It was nearly the same with the Compensation Bill. Introduced by Ministers as a comparatively mild measure, it was improved by the Labour men in Committee to such an extent that little remains to be done now in the way of workmen's compensation. Labour took the infant measure under its protection, and shaped it into something of which its parents had perhaps a very faint anticipation. Nor was this all. When the Government at last presented its crop of Bills to an indignant House of Lords, it was not to the strong battalions of Liberalism that that body submitted, but to the little corps of Labour men. The Education Bill, with all the force of angry non-conformity behind it, came back a mutilated wreck, and was abandoned; while it fared little better with the other non-Labour measures of the Government. But the two Bills that had the peculiar favour of the Labour Party passed through untouched. The Lords were sullen, but submissive, and Labour reaped the substantial honours of the session.

The reason lies outside the House of Commons. While the Labour Party actually contested only slightly over fifty seats at the General Election, winning only thirty, there are many hundreds of constituencies in industrial Britain where the party, without perhaps being strong enough to put forth candidates of its own, commands hundreds, perhaps thousands, of votes. In the elections of 1906, where there was no candidate of their own party

in the field, this vote undoubtedly went, in the main, to the Liberals. So it did in the remarkable series of bye-elections that preceded the Liberal triumph. The first striking Liberal victory of the series, that at Bury, illustrates this. The shilling registration duty on corn had just been imposed by the Tories, and against that the Independent Labour Party in the town took the first opportunity to make a protest. The tax cut dead against the principles of Labour finance, in this case in line with those of Radicalism, and threatened to lead to an increase of indirect as against direct taxation. The moral of this has never been grasped by Tariff reformers, who are apt still to think that at some happy time in the future Labour will adopt their nostrum. Labour, of course, will never connive at any means whereby the possessors of unearned incomes can direct either new or old taxes on to the shoulders of the people. Under other circumstances, Labour might readily have been willing to look on at the contest without taking much interest in either party. In Lancashire, unlike most other counties, the normal Trade Unionist feeling has always been Conservative, rather than Liberal, while the Liberal candidate was not a person whom the party had any reason to favour. At the previous General Election a newspaper controlled by him had advised the electors of Preston to vote for the Tory, rather than let Mr. Keir Hardie in. Nevertheless, on the bread tax issue, the local Independent Labour Party advised its friends to vote Liberal, and the first of a long series of victorious bye-elections

was won. After that, Mr. Balfour's Government took care that Labour should not be able to avoid voting against it. Undeterred by or misunderstanding the bye-elections at Bury and North Leeds, or their connection with the shilling corn duty, Mr. Chamberlain instituted the policy of Tariff Reform; while his successor at the Colonial Office followed this up by discovering, with perverse ingenuity, the measure most offensive alike to the prejudices and right feeling of the average workman. If the Chinese Labour Ordinance had guaranteed to unindentured workmen a Trade Union wage, with liberty to leave the mines at a moment's notice, there would have been no real humanitarian reason for complaint; yet the ordinary national prejudice against the Chinaman would probably have been enough to lose the Government scores of seats. The Ordinance being what it was, however, it was equally shocking to the enlightened humanitarianism of the day; and even if their Socialist advisers had wanted them to do otherwise, it is certain that the great bulk of English Trade Unionists would have voted against the Tories in 1906, even if there were no Labour candidate in the field to secure their support.

The secret of the Labour Party's power is the knowledge of hundreds of ordinary members of Parliament that there is a large Labour vote among their own constituents, to quarrel with which would be political suicide. Unlike the Irish vote, this exists in considerable force in every large town; while, in a great but unknown number of cases, it

is practically the largest party vote in the constituency. As such, it is a force of great potency. The Liberal member knows perfectly well that, at the next General Election, he will almost certainly be opposed by a Conservative; and he knows also that no possible action of his will conciliate the Conservative party vote. For this reason he has nothing to gain by deferring to it. But Labour, fighting, for financial reasons if no other, only a limited number of seats, can pick and choose for which seats it will do battle. Hardly a sitting member, Liberal or Conservative, is sure of a contest against Labour, or certain, in the absence of a candidate of its own, whether the Labour vote will go for him or his opponent, or whether it will be given to neither. What is certain, generally, is that upon the action of Labour will depend whether he returns to Parliament after the next General Election; a fact that makes him, at least, exceedingly deferential to the Labour Party. He may work against them behind the scenes; he may try to obstruct their Bills in Committee, and exercise his influence on his fellow-members to hamper their projects; but he is very reluctant indeed to record his vote against them on a public division, knowing well that such a vote will tell heavily against him the next time he seeks the suffrages of the electors. The unfortunate vote will be criticised immediately by the local I.L.P., and no Trade Unionist among his electors but will be fully informed of his enormity.

It is this respect for the Labour vote outside,

much more than the mere influence of its members in the House, that makes the Labour Party such a force in Parliament. But there is another factor of equal importance. The very existence of an independent party makes the personal electoral pledges of the private member, Liberal or Tory, of vastly more importance than they used to be. "Old Age Pensions," said Mr. Chamberlain on one occasion, "was always a hobby of mine," and many members, much less eminent than Mr. Chamberlain, have won votes and elections by similar "hobbies." There is a true medium between those who welcome with enthusiastic faith the pledges of a parliamentary candidate, and those who think all members who fail to redeem them fraudulent. The path of politics is strewn with the *unfulfilled* pledges of politicians, but the number of deliberately *broken* ones is far less numerous. The candidate who offers to support this or that reform is, probably enough, perfectly sincere; and the trifling fact that, five years after, he will seek re-election, having made no effort to redeem his promise, does not prove that he has intentionally deceived. Government by party has the unfortunate effect of rendering it almost impossible to consider anything, unless it is convenient, either to Ministers or the Opposition, to do so. The new member may be pledged to all sorts of reforms and brimming with enthusiasm; but it is fairly certain that, unless it happens to accord with the convenience of his party, he will never get the opportunity to divide the House on

any one of them, much less to carry it into law. If he succeeds in getting a day for the purpose, it is easy to arrange for his measure to be talked out, even if he is so determined as to give no heed to the Whips' request not to embarrass the Government. If he presses an inconvenient hobby, things will be made very uncomfortable for him, both in the House, and among the tamer members of the party in his constituency. Somehow, if he is too persistent, he will be got rid off, and another candidate, equally "promising," but more willing, not to break his pledges, but to defer the consideration of them to a convenient season, will be obtained. Let it be understood that no Government has any objection to a candidate winning a seat for it on any programme he chooses. So long as he includes those items directly in debate between the two sides at the moment, and is willing to defer in practice other matters until they have been settled, he may win votes by promising anything from Women's Suffrage to Socialism. These things do not matter. Lord Salisbury certainly did not agree with Mr. Chamberlain's social programme of 1895; but it would have been mere foolish meddling to prevent him winning elections by its means, since nearly all the items could readily be forgotten in office, so long as the Premier himself remained unpledged. There are well-known Socialists in the present Liberal majority, and these men are able and sincere. Again, it does not matter, as Socialism is not likely to crop up as a crucial point in contemporary politics in this

Parliament. The pledges given by an individual candidate are simply out of his power to fulfil; strictly speaking, he can neither keep nor break faith with those who exact them, unless it suits the convenience of the Government.

Now, speaking generally, "Labour" politics come under the head of inconvenient subjects to the leaders of both political parties. The great difference, for example, between the position of Old Age Pensions in the present Parliament and under Lord Salisbury does not consist in the superior friendliness of the Government. None of the Cabinet have pressed the subject so much as Mr. Chamberlain did, and, quite possibly, none of them is so much interested in it. But, in the Parliament of 1895–1900, there was no Labour Party, and Ministers, once firmly seated in office, could devote their time and attention to more convenient things, confident that there was no one in the House who would insist upon bringing the matter to the front. Members pledged to Mr. Chamberlain's proposals were not compelled to vote *against* their pledges; they were simply relieved from the necessity of voting at all. It is otherwise now. Assuredly members will be accorded an opportunity of voting, for or against, any measure they have undertaken to support, if the passing of it would be any gain to the working-classes. The Whips, when there is a pledged majority of members on any measure, will be compelled either to get the Government to take the matter up, or to get their following, not merely to submit to the

matter lying over for a while, but definitely to record votes against their promises, and take the consequences of such action at the next General Election. This is a very much harder thing to do. If Members of Parliament are no better than other people, they are also no worse, and there is no reason to suppose that, in the vast majority of cases, they are really insincere in their pledges. But they are good party men, honestly believing that it would be a calamity for the country to see the Opposition in power. To such, there is a good deal to be said against hampering and perhaps upsetting a Government on one particular measure, when the immediate consequence might be the loss of many more, almost equally important. So long, then, as obedience to pressure involves merely indefinite delay, and not a public repudiation of his promise, the private member obeys his Whips and comes back to his constituents with an easy conscience, to renew the same futile promises.

But when any question on which the majority of the House is pledged is actually coming to a division, when members must vote one way or another, the Government Whips have a much less easy time. Ministers are themselves aware that in resisting the advocates of the measure in question they are alienating that section of the electors who voted for their following on account of it. It would be in vain to argue that pledges given on this account were not Government pledges; the average British elector is not capable of subtilties of that kind, and if he were, he wants

the measure, and would not care. Reluctant members, pressed to enter the Government lobby, can urge, not only their promises, but the manifest injury Ministers are doing to them and to the party prospects. Normally it is the private member who promises, the Whip who commands; now it is the Whips, and Ministers through them, who have to make terms with their followers. Out of few such divisions can even a strong Government escape uninjured or unpledged. Generally, in some way or other, the Government will probably find it necessary to avoid the crucial division in the only way possible, by getting the mover of it to withdraw the inconvenient motion, rather than to compel numbers of its followers to offend their constituents.

Now, when the movers of a resolution on, say, Old Age Pensions, happen to be an Independent Labour Party, in no way interested in the preservation of the Government, but only in the measure itself, nothing will secure its withdrawal except a satisfactory Government guarantee to deal with the matter at the first opportunity; indeed, at a specified time. To buy off the motion, Ministers must advance the proposal from the status of a private member's fad to a Cabinet measure. The Labour Party is in no way concerned either to help or hinder any Government; it cares only to act as a rudder, turning the attention of Parliament as a whole on to the social question. As soon as it has secured that end, we may rest assured it will not be foolish enough to upset one

of the opposing parties only to put the other in. The first practical effect of Labour's arrival in the House is that Parliament will, for the future, be compelled to give continuous attention to the "condition of England" question, whichever party is in power. The personal pledges of candidates to land and financial reformers, to women suffragists, to advocates of housing reform, of old age pensions, of an eight hours' day, will, for the future, mean something. The candidate who gives a promise of this kind may rest assured he will either have to redeem his pledge or break it. When he seeks re-election, he will not be able to appear as a colourless promiser, but as one who performs his word or as one forsworn.

No doubt this will soon have the effect of making candidates much more careful about the pledges they give, and of preventing parties from allowing capital to be made by "unauthorised programmes" which may have inconvenient consequences after an election. But in proportion as Liberals and Conservatives keep a tighter hand on their representatives, so will the latter, and the parties themselves, lose touch with enthusiastic reformers among the electorate. As individuals lose the power to make bids for the Labour vote, the parties themselves will be compelled to become more definite. Liberalism, in particular, will be compelled to support its assertion that there is no need for a Labour Party by becoming more and more like the Labour Party itself. The advent of a Labour Party must ere long be

followed by the retirement of the typical Liberal capitalist from every industrial constituency where the Labour Party gains a foothold.

These things imply, in the first place, a vast revival in the power of the House of Commons over any possible Government. They make for the influence of the private member, who in future arguments with his party Whips will generally be able to point unanswerably to the effect any anti-Labour vote will have on his electors. He must, and he knows he must, walk warily or he may afford an opening for a Labour candidate at the next election. The party authorities will soon get to know this as well as he. New Liberal candidates will tend, ever more and more, to be selected from the Radical or Liberal-Labour groups, rather than from Whig capitalist sections. The Labour Party are the great "permeators," but they permeate from without.

That such a position of affairs makes the Labour Party powerful in all the understood problems of immediately practicable "social reform," almost goes without saying. The present Parliament—as, indeed, all past ones—is converted in detail to numberless reforms of which Ministers as such take no cognisance. The Women's Suffrage agitation has called attention to one of the most important of these, and revealed to the country that it is no use getting even four hundred and twenty members of Parliament converted to any particular reform, unless you can induce the party in power to make

it a Cabinet measure. But, by forcing measures on which there is a pledged Parliamentary majority into the division lobbies, the Labour Party can readily make many merely academic questions into practical ones. Outside these, for the present, the party cannot go. Thirty-two men cannot rule six hundred and fifty, if the latter combine to oppose them; as they would certainly do were the party to press forward any measure to which public opinion was not yet educated, and to which the majority of the House was definitely opposed.

The present Cabinet, as such, cannot be said to be pledged to anything particular except the maintenance of Free Trade; but the individual members of Parliament, Liberal and Conservative alike, have been committed to hosts of social reforms—the taxation of land values, the graduation of the income tax, old age pensions, the feeding of school children, the limitation of the hours of labour, a standard minimum rate of pay for Government workmen, the support of progressive politics on municipal bodies — all of these are measures to which the vast majority of Liberals, and even Tory members for industrial constituencies, are pledged, and in which most of them believe. Were there no Labour Party in the country and in the House, such measures might, for all that, have remained mere pious opinions of private members for a generation. The arrival of a party bent especially on keeping these things to the front makes it fairly safe to prophesy they will not take many years to pass into law. So

fast as the Socialist leaven within the party succeeds in permeating the Trade Unionist rank and file with a desire for any particular social reform, that reform will become a crucial question of politics which no Government can ignore.

I see little reason to doubt, then, that current Labour questions, those that are now prominently before the public, must, in the near future, be decided on Labour lines. But there are limitations, which it is well to notice, to the power of the party. The strength of the new party is due to the union of ideal and organic Socialism. By this alliance the idealist obtains a practical knowledge of the particular and present-day needs of the organisations with which he comes in contact, while the Trade Unionists gain an ever-widening outlook and a far greater enthusiasm. Socialism becomes a formidable political force, but its strength, it must be remembered, is limited by the extent and influence of Trade Unionism. Where there are no Unions, Socialism is still a propaganda only.[1] If the poor of the counties and the South were organised as the artisans of the Midlands and North, a very few years might see the downfall of capitalism in England. I fear, however, that the maxim "industrial organisation must precede political organisation" is sound; and that before the agricultural counties are ripe for Independent Labour politics on the great scale, there must be some social growth serving a similar purpose to the Unions in the towns. Two things must first be rooted in English

[1] In Colne Valley division, however, Trade Unionism is not strong, though clearly Socialism is so.

life, one material and the other spiritual. The poor of the country districts must develop organisations capable of financing their own candidates;[1] and in the making of these organisations must grow that spirit of fellowship, that realisation of interdependence, which actual experience can alone teach the majority of men.

But such organisations will certainly grow, so soon as the opportunity to form them exists. Trade Unionism is the particular instrument evolved by the spirit of association, to deal with the peculiar difficulties of the factory worker and miner under modern conditions. Change the conditions, and the very same spirit will produce the most varied phenomenal expressions. Two things only can be generally relied upon: when men have the opportunity, they will organise for mutual assistance in some way or other; and when they have created their union, society, or whatever it is called, they will take a growing pride and interest in it. If there is no combination among the poor, we may be assured that is because it is, for some reason or other, impossible. Poverty, abject dependence upon a jealous squirearchy, the tyranny of the farmer, who can watch much more closely the first movements towards union of his little group of men living under his eyes, than the factory owner those of the hundreds, of whose doings after the factory bell has rung he knows nothing, may act

[1] Payment of members and election expenses will probably be law before any county organisations have time to grow, but I doubt if elections will be even then much less costly. Candidates will spend what they save on the Returning Officer's costs in advertisements.

more effectively than the old Combination Laws to prevent common action among the peasantry. But as soon as the peasant leaves the land, he organises, just as the townsman does. If the Land Act of last session be half so successful as its promotors wish in freeing the rural labourer from direct subservience to his "pastors and masters," I have little doubt he too will soon have an organic Socialism of his own. Probably his organisations will differ greatly from Trade Unions; but that does not matter, so long as they are controlled by the people themselves, or by paid servants of the people. The allotment holders and small tenants of the county councils will need co-operation, not less, but more than others. Associations of some sort they will need, for cheaper buying in large quantities, for co-operative distribution, for mutual insurance. And as the organisations grow, so will that Socialist spirit which comes from the realisation of our interdependence grow also. The narrow and immediate aim of each society will expand, as the funds and spirit of the society permits, into educational, local, and political channels. The new associations will have their legal difficulties, and will want modifications in the law. Hodge has the example and success of his town brother to stimulate him, and he will probably, when he has an industrial organisation strong enough to do it, take much less time than the Trade Unionists to realise the importance of independent politics. He will certainly be ceaselessly reminded of this by the missionaries of

the Independent Labour Party. When he falls into line with the proletariat of the towns to enforce a common programme for the workers of England, already organised industrially, the victory of Socialism will be near at hand.

CHAPTER II

THE DOWNFALL OF CAPITALISM

WHEN the British working classes in town and country are alike organised, I said at the close of the last chapter, "the victory of Socialism will be near at hand." So it will, in the narrower sense that implies the supersession of individual by collective ownership of land, and those essentially co-operative forms of industrial capital which have come into existence since the Industrial Revolution. But this does not imply the creation of any logical system of universal public ownership such as that described in *Looking Backward*, still less that complete harmony of the individual and social wills of mankind in a life of co-operative fellowship, which is, I submit, the logical outcome of the "substitution of the state of mutual peace for that of mutual war." What the people will not permit, so soon as the control of affairs comes definitely into their hands, is the private ownership of railways, canals, great factories, steamships, banks, electric power, and so on, out of which live the swarm of social parasites, whose incomes are derived, not from their own industry, but from that of others. It will be the same with the great agencies of distribution, now everywhere tending to centralisation. The small

shopkeeper is steadily being squeezed out of existance by syndicates buying wholesale and more economically, even where the people, through the agency of voluntary co-operation, are not driving him out themselves. As I deal with the question of the drink traffic in a special chapter, it will only be necessary here to say that the people, as a mere matter of public health, will certainly assure themselves of the purity and regular distribution of their food supply by creating a public one. On such points it may now safely be said that the will of the common people is Socialist already; and when Parliament is the direct expression of that will, these things will be done.

Before the Labour Party can thus command Parliament, and pending the spread of industrial organisation beyond its present limits, Labour must be content to influence Governments composed of members of the other parties. When Labour at last comes into power, that influence will probably already have done much. Quite certainly, though the bulk of the land may still be private property, the State will have levied a tax or rate on economic rent, while a good deal of land will have passed under the control of the local bodies. We may rest assured, also, that many valuable legislative principles will have been recognised, which will be useful to the earlier Socialist ministries. Labour in opposition will insert the thin end of many wedges which it will be reserved for Labour in office to drive home.

To take fiscal matters first. There are few

points on which the Labour movement lays more stress than on the graduation of the Income Tax. To raise a sufficient fund, mainly by a super-tax on incomes over £2000 a year, is, indeed, a matter on which the party has made up its mind. If Mr. Asquith does nothing of this kind next session, it is probable the Government will have a very nasty time with the Labour men. Most likely, therefore, Mr. Asquith will do something, at any rate before the Liberals go to the country; if he does not, some future Chancellor will before very long. The Labour Party's touch with the people is far too intimate for the agitation to rest. But neither Mr. Asquith, nor any probable early successor, is at all likely to do this thing in the way or on the scale the Labour Party want it done. Like all politicians faced, as he will be, with a determined Labour pressure urging him to advance, and an equally vigorous capitalist objection to the expense, he will almost certainly take the line of compromise. He will endeavour to give his party the chance to claim that they have graduated the Income Tax and provided something for Old Age Pensions, without running up a bill big enough to cause a revolt among the wealthy supporters of the party. But, even so, however small the pensions, and however late the ages at which they commence, he is virtually bound to establish two important precedents: to get the money for any scheme that will pass muster at all, he must either surcharge the larger incomes or tax land values;

while pensions, even on the most parsimonious scale, must some day lead to an adequate system. Henceforth it will no longer be necessary for the Labour Party to argue about the desirability of the State granting pensions, but only upon the question of their adequacy. It is certain that, for years to come, the party will have no difficulty in proving that the pensions granted are too small.

It is the same with the graduation of the Income Tax. Suppose Mr. Asquith were to go so far as to take a second shilling off incomes over £5000, that would be far short of what a Labour minister would do in his place. The members of the group may not be quite at one upon the Socialist idea of some day taxing to extinction *all* unearned incomes; but it is certain that, if they had their way, the tax would soon be so graduated as to render the millionaire impossible. The Labour Party's graduation will be a logical one, rising by stages with every additional thousand pounds of income, until all over a certain maximum is taken by the State. The same will apply in the case of the Death Duties; certainly Labour will aim at a State limitation of the power of bequest.

But if Labour will not get all its own way, either out of this Parliament or some early one, it will, as already said, probably obtain a useful precedent for almost every financial reform it wishes to make. The distinction between earned and unearned incomes, made for the first time

in Mr. Asquith's last Budget, is itself of considerable value this way; while the Scottish Land Valuation Bill, though thrown out by the Lords, was not without its uses. Such reforms, however short a distance they may go, prepare the public mind, and compel the Inland Revenue Office to collect statistics valuable in the preparation of more extensive schemes.

Another valuable precedent has been created by the Land Act of last session. The transfer of land and industrial capital from private to public ownership is a transaction the profit of which naturally depends on the price the public pays for each acquisition. Hitherto, for any land acquired by a public authority, the vendor has been able to claim, as compensation for compulsory purchase, an artificial price; this probably after the figure has been swollen by all sorts of imaginary claims for the "worsement" of other property, and wild estimates of possible increases in the future value of the land. Land thus usually costs a corporation much more than its value in the open market. The Land Act of last year grants nothing for compulsory purchase; while the separate valuation of land will, ere long, prevent the prices to public authorities being swollen by speculators for the future. The first Labour ministry will find the public fully prepared to expropriate compulsorily the owners of land and capital at a real, not an artificial valuation.

Lastly, Labour will, even while it acts only

as an influence outside the responsible Government of the day, certainly achieve much on what I may call the humanitarian side of social reform. The Employment of the Working Classes Act of the late Government is a very ineffective thing; but even it provides a valuable precedent. Among many defects, its greatest is lack of finance,—a few millions a year given to support the farm colonies permitted by the Act would make it a very useful piece of legislation indeed. This and more we may be assured the Labour Party will ere long be able to extort from one party or the other. The direct and immediate aim of the party is the provision of work for all willing men and women who need it, at a minimum rate, without the taint of pauperism. When that is obtainable, the day of the sweater in England is over; for nobody will work for a private employer at lower rates than he can obtain from the public authority. Nor will the Labour Party long permit the children of the State to be inadequately fed and clothed, any more than it will allow its old workers to be driven into pauperism. These, with the steady development of municipal life, to provide for better sanitation and better housing, with improvements to our system of public education, are commonly advocated by politicians of all schools. The Labour Party is in the House of Commons to see that parties and members do the things they advocate.

But all this is very far from the overthrow of

the capitalist system of industry. All these reforms might be carried out, and, while they would themselves constitute an enormous improvement in the condition of the poor, the rich might still be richer than ever. As aids towards Socialism, they would be chiefly valuable for the direction they would tend to give to the public mind, by making the poor understand that the State could really influence for good their daily lives, and the rich realise that their dividends were not wholly their own, but were subject to toll for the needs of society. These, with a higher general standard of intelligence and education, would be the main aids the further progress of Socialism would gain from "social reform," as understood by Liberals and Conservatives. But the framework of capitalism would remain, as it does yet in our Australian Colonies, where many of these things are commonplaces of political life. Had the Labour Socialist movement developed a generation sooner, for instance, and all these things come into law during the last ten years, provision for the whole of them could readily have been made, and still the "classes" would have been far richer than they were at the beginning of the period. The amount assessible to Income Tax in the United Kingdom has, during the last few years, increased no less than £200,000,000, one-fourth of which sum would amply fulfil all the most advanced Radical pledges, while leaving the receivers of rent and interest richer by £150,000,000 than in

1887. The limitation of Individualism, so as to make life tolerable to the poor, would still render it possible for an ever-growing number of parasites to continue living on an industry to which they contribute nothing.

The main battle will not be settled until the leading monopolies of our industrial system have become public property. After that, all that remains to be done is matter of detail. Socialisation of the land, most probably in detail, and under the control of local authorities, nationalisation of the railways, a public department of waste lands and forests, and a national banking system, together with, perhaps the most important thing of all, a public and national supply of electric power,—on these things the whole question turns. We will very hardly get a settlement of any one of them, except from a definitely Labour ministry; though such an event as the universal strike of railway men, lately threatened, might bring one or other of them within the sphere of practical politics as understood by Liberals and Conservatives.

I have attached a place of supreme importance to the public ownership of electric power. How far this is justified depends, of course, upon how far this wonderful new force really replaces the older one of steam. But if we look at the adaptability of electricity, it seems probable that the days of steam are passing away. Electricity can be generated by any force, and distributed along wires any distance. Niagara lights the

streets and drives the engines of cities hundreds of miles away, and the French are damming the Rhone now, to gain motive power for use in Paris. Electricity, generated by the force of the tides and streams, and distributed throughout the country, may very readily supplant all other means of driving engines and machines before the present generation passes away. If so, the owners of that power, whether the State or a monopolist trust, will dominate industry. No wise State, faced with such an alternative, would hesitate for a moment in its choice. If electricity, generated wholesale in some central positions and distributed from there throughout the land, is, in the future, to be a cheaper motive power than steam raised on the spot, then either a syndicate of millionaires must hold British industry in their hands, or the nation must own the power stations. From the railway system of the country, down to the smallest electric motor, all industry will depend upon the same monopoly. The utter absurdity of allowing such a power to be controlled by any but the people themselves may appeal even to the old school of politicians. There is no teacher of Socialism so potent as fact. Electricity can be made public property now far cheaper than at any future time, generally cheaper indeed than the last century monopolies it is displacing; and it is quite possible the first Labour ministry may find its most important work done to its hands.

With the control of the State over all the central

processes of industry, the day of the millionaire in English life would be over, but the more moderately wealthy business man would probably find he had a long lease of life. With a tax falling heavily on unearned incomes, the mere idle shareholder would become very rare or cease, and through the working of Unemployed and drastic Factory Acts it would be virtually impossible to make money by sweating. But from the farmer of a County Council "small holding" to the builder of Atlantic liners, the competent business man might still have a large field before him. His electric power would be supplied by the State cheaper than he could generate it himself;[1] his goods would be carried to and from the factory on national railways, just as his letters are now carried by national post; he would have to bank with the State, issuing notes, probably made out, as suggested by Mr. Wells, in units of electric power, not of gold. All his men would be Trade Unionists, to whom he would have to give better terms than they could get at the Labour Bureau, with its minimum rate, calculated on the cost of a decent life. He would, very possibly, be faced with municipal or co-operative rivals, who would take very good care that his profits were really the reward of his own superior management, while there would be no monopolist undertakings in which he could invest his savings. But the teeth

[1] This owing to the scale of production. The difference in cost between generating power on a very large and on a moderate scale seems to be enormous.

of capitalism once drawn, I fancy the English people would not be likely to expropriate him from mere *doctrinaire* considerations. He would probably continue to flourish for several generations, filling perhaps even a widening sphere of social life.

For we must separate *State* Socialism from the great social process, tending towards universal co-operation and equality, of which it is a modern phase. That the Higher Socialism may have room to grow, we must render it impossible for individuals to exploit society as the unrestrained private control of the instruments of production has, in the nineteenth century, permitted them to do. But, as has been pointed out by Mr. J. A. Hobson, the very success of the central purpose of modern Socialism, the ownership by the State of the great monopolies, of those industries where the law of increasing returns applies most extensively, implies a large development in those other forms of industry, which are not as yet, and perhaps never will be, monopolies. The possibilities of electricity promise greatly to increase the number and importance of these; while the movement for intensive agriculture, likely to go far in a crowded country like this, all tends the same way.

If we look around the world of industry to-day, we will see that a very large proportion of the people are yet employed apart from the great factories, or capitalist undertakings, properly so called. Roughly, capitalism is only possible where there is

some economy in employing men in the mass at wages, instead of them employing themselves as individual producers. On the fringe of the wages class, then, there exists, and has always existed, a large number of people whom I may call the self-employing proletariat. Sweeps, costermongers, organ-grinders, people who go about tinkering pots and pans, recaning chairs and mending knives and scissors, belong to this class. Some of them are engaged in direct manufacture, as dressmakers dealing with a limited circle of customers, the makers of clay pipes and rubbing stones, and various small articles not yet brought within the circle of machine production. With these are the survivors of many once important handicrafts, sometimes perhaps managing to exist by reason of the superior artistry of their work, more often producing degraded wares by hand, in stern competition with machine-made articles. Altogether this class makes a considerable fraction of the community. Though, when compared to the increased population, fewer than in past times, I doubt whether there has been any actual decline in their numbers since the Industrial Revolution.

I have said this self-employing proletariat are greatly affected by the surrounding capitalism, and in truth their prosperity is greatly affected by the changes in the Labour market. Between the self-employing and the wage labour classes there is a large population of both men and women who may, on occasion, belong to either the one or the

other. The labourer, paid off in slack times, may very readily find employment, and earn a few shillings by sweeping chimneys or chopping sticks; or he may obtain a hawker's licence, and go about with a barrow of vegetables. But he will generally be ready enough to throw up such a precarious method of making a living so soon as he can get regular work, at however low wages. Too probably he will, ere then, have lost as a free lance his sense of working-class solidarity, and may be willing to come in as a blackleg on the occasion of some Labour dispute; but unless he has the Ishmael taint in his blood, he may pass from one form of employment to the other readily enough.

The life is terribly precarious, and our modern self-employing proletariat are mere shadows of the free pedlars and small merchants of pre-factory days, when all industry was organised on like individualistic lines. Those of them who live by the manufacture of some article in too small demand for the greater industry, are ever in danger of finding their occupation gone, so soon as their industry in turn becomes sufficiently extensive to tempt some capitalist to undertake its manufacture on a larger scale. "Charity," too, displaces many of them, by setting orphanage boys on to chop sticks, or do other odd jobs out of which they have made a living. On the other hand, the very progress of the great industry creates new trades of this class. Handy men go about doing small repairs, or selling odd necessaries to the

factories, not unimportant in the aggregate, but individually too small to be worth the employment of a regular man.

Relatively to the total population, no doubt, this class was once much more numerous as well as more prosperous than to-day, and there are certain things which, coupled with the socialisation of the greater industries, lead me to believe they may, in the near future, become numerous and prosperous again. They are obviously unsuitable material for State Socialism; and if they are ever to become members of an absolutely Co-operative Society, that will only be after the main battle has been fought and won, and in a very different way from the owners and employees of the greater industries.

It is necessary to give grounds for the belief expressed, that the socialisation of the greater industries would increase the numbers and prosperity of the class with which we are dealing. The first reason why there are so few of them is that, under present-day conditions, it is very nearly impossible to pick up a decent living this way. But if the prospects were better, the life itself is an attractive one to certain personalities. On the whole, it is astounding how readily the majority of working people have accommodated themselves to the regular hours and common rules essential to factory life, considering, as we must, how little the human animal during millions of years of evolution has been prepared for such conditions. That factory hands and office workers

occasionally "sleep in" and lose time is to me little matter for wonder, compared to the amazement with which I think of the numbers of men and women who catch the same trains or trams every morning in life, on their way to work, and every evening, on their return from it. Let no man talk of the regimentation of the people under Socialism; every shopman, clerk, or factory hand is drilled into absolute uniformity of action now. Yet this complete subservience of human instinct to established rule is, when we think of the ages of evolution, startlingly modern. Nature imposes, from time to time, the most strenuous exertion on animal and savage, but she imposes it in a fitful and irregular manner. How that element in human nature which has enabled the Western nations to accommodate themselves, on the whole so well, to the conditions of factory life came into existence, is a mystery I must leave to others to solve. Right up to the invention of agriculture, a thing of yesterday, speaking from an evolutionary point of view, there was no such thing as systematic work in the world except amongst bees and ants, while the factory bell is newer still.

It is not amazing, then, to find frequent instances of an atavism which leads men to find factory life intolerable. This atavism is not laziness. Very frequently the gipsy type is capable of great and prolonged exertion, though it is equally prone to a "restfulness" that may last for weeks. What it cannot tolerate is regularity, and while

willing to work at one time far harder than other people, makes up for this by doing nothing at all at others. As a whole, the type is imaginative above the average, producing more than its fair share of men and women of genius. It is useful, too, as a standing protest against conventions of all kinds, and established respectabilities generally. The self-employing proletarians are the Bohemians of the poor; and, indeed, it was a sure instinct for analogy that made artistic circles adopt the gipsy name. Granting freely that the more regular life of other classes indicates, on the whole, a higher stage of advance, a more perfect adaptation of individual instinct to social life, an element of Bohemianism is inevitable, and perhaps not undesirable at present.

The socialisation of those forms of production and distribution which are, or shortly will be, carried on on the great scale by machinery, or organised most economically by large establishments, together with the maintenance of a guaranteed minimum standard of living, seems likely in many ways to offer the self-employing proletariat a much better prospect than at present. Many things might tend to increase their numbers and prosperity during the next generation. First comes the revival of agriculture of the intensive kind. This is itself an occupation laborious, but less closely regimented than factory life; but it is not directly that I think it likely to increase the class. Agriculture responded much less rapidly than manufactures to the centralising and

mechanical tendencies of the nineteenth century. Machinery made much less rapid progress there, in spite of the fact that farming in England has confined itself, almost exclusively, to those crops which lend themselves most readily to its introduction. The steam-plough, the self-binder, the steam-thresher, and other labour-saving devices depend very largely upon uniformity of crop; and the same applies very largely to everything used in the scientific dairy. Englishmen have been slow to adopt these improvements; they have been equally slow to realise that the market is now demanding from the farmer, not corn and meat alone, but an infinite variety of things as well. Hence the production of eggs and vegetables, of all that used at one time, when nearly everyone had a garden, to be produced by the cottager or even the townsman for his own use, but which are now in great demand, has passed into the hands of the foreigner. It is the same with the raising of timber, which the Englishman, like other people, was at one time accustomed to cut, but not to raise. The shrinkage of the world's forests, however, has induced better organised States to grow their own timber, and we have continued to supply only that part of the modern market which has survived from older times. The butcher and the baker are still almost the only customers of the British farmer, though the modern city household pays almost as much for other foodstuffs as it does for bread and meat.

But the modern hunger for allotments and small

holdings must change all this. Certainly, the community, influenced, as it will be, by Socialist pressure, will not be foolish enough to allow the title to any land the use of which is granted to small holders, to pass out of the hands of the public. Certainly, also, the conditions of modern life will compel the new peasantry, as they are compelling those of foreign countries, to co-operate, in order to secure economies both in the purchase of manure and seeds, and in the sale of their produce. There will therefore be State Socialism in the ownership of the land, and some organic Socialism in buying and selling. But with a growing market for vegetables, eggs, fruits, jams, and flowers, the small holder will certainly not long continue on the traditional lines of English farming. Instead of being the producer of one thing, the worker at a limited number of processes which can be reduced to routine and perhaps done by machinery, the small holder will be engaged in a multitude of operations, raising a varied assortment of crops. You can introduce a good deal of machinery into the work of a farm, but very little into that of a garden. The Allotment Movement implies a certain return to individualism in production; though, almost from the first, it will probably involve a good deal of Socialism, or at least co-operation, in the work of distribution.

Meantime, the creation of allotments and of a small-holder class implies a great improvement in the independence and the pay of those, few or many, who remain agricultural labourers of the old type. His allotment garden, and his dividend saved in the

society that sells his produce for him, will be the Trade-Union Reserve Fund of the future agricultural labourer. The satisfaction of the land-hunger should bring to an end that depressing poverty of English rural life which is guilty of so many evils. Among other things, it will be of enormous benefit to the small trader and the pedlar. Even Autolycus would be puzzled to extract much money from agricultural labourers, earning ten or twelve shillings a week, and dispersed over scattered farmsteads. Such men's wives want few things, and they or their husbands have to do all the odd jobs themselves. On the same area peopled by a number of prosperous small holders, however, or among farm labourers earning decent wages, the case would be very different. Where industry is brisk and money reasonably plentiful, there is always something for the "handy man" to do, always someone who is willing to buy. The revival of country life, then, may readily mean a large increase, not only in the class of peasant leaseholders hiring land from the parish or county council, and distributing the products mainly through socialised channels, though working their holdings individually themselves, but in the class of itinerant merchants and tinkers, or even of small country shopkeepers. But if the revival of agriculture seems likely to extend the classes not regimented under the factory system, the potent developments of electricity promise to do much more in the same way. The essential economic difference, as a motor power, between electricity and steam is that, while the former demands an even greater centralisation in

production, it is consistent with almost infinite decentralisation in the use. You can generate your electric power and pass it along a wire miles away to the place where you require to use it. This is an even more important quality of the new motive force than its cleanliness, and points to the possibility of another Industrial Revolution as far-reaching in its effects as that wrought by steam. The tides of the Pentland Firth may, some day soon, be driving the wheel of a Staffordshire potter, or the coffee-roaster of a London grocer, lighting the streets of Plymouth, and propelling all the rolling stock of the United Kingdom. While, therefore, electricity demands, even more than steam, national ownership of the sources of supply, it admits of a larger amount of individualism in its use than would have been safe with the latter. Steam, by compelling the congregation of the workers close around the power supply, created the factory system; electricity, by rendering this unnecessary, may largely end it.

Now, as has been shown by Kropotkin, it is one of the essentials of really prosperous small farming that there should be some profitable method of filling in the winter hours. The culture of the land has the disadvantage of depending upon the seasons—there is too much work to do in summer and too little in winter. Where small holdings have done best, then, the peasants have generally had some handicraft to which they could turn during the dead months of the year; of this kind are the peasant handicrafts of Russia to which the attention of this country has been called by Madame Pogosky, and for the sale

of which there is an emporium in Glasgow. With the development of English agricultural life, and the increase of a rural population, there will be a great amount of useful human labour going to waste every winter, unless some such occupation is found for the people. I think it will be found, that the present century will see a large peasant occupier class settled on the land. No one will occupy more land than, with a little help from outside at harvest time, he can cultivate for himself in the summer. This will leave the peasant free in the winter to fill in many spare hours at some handicraft, the produce of which, as well as of his holding, will mainly be disposed of for him by some collective agency. In his house or workshop will be a small electric motor, useful for those parts, both of his farm and handicraft work, that can be done by mechanical means. He will not abolish the factory altogether, nor supplant the great city; but he will tend very largely to keep in the country those trades which are independent of proximity to the sea, or deposits of coal and iron. Manufactures which have been and can be as readily dispersed over the land as electric power, which have only been concentrated because of the centralising necessities of steam, will tend gradually to re-disperse when those necessities have been withdrawn; and the congestion of our large cities will be removed.

It may be said that I am here giving up the case for Socialism. Of this, as will be seen later, I am by no means guilty. The essential contention of this chapter is the importance of making common

property of the main arteries of modern industry—the land, the means of transport, exchange, and electric power. That, coupled with the devotion of the profits of these, now mainly private, monopolies, to the better feeding, education, and general well-being of the people, the establishment of a reasonable standard of life for all, will provide a work for more than one generation, of which we need not feel ashamed. Further developments after that belong to the province, not of State, but of ideal Socialism, of which I shall deal at the close of this book.

Meantime, and as some preparation for what is to follow, I must remind the reader that economically all these suggested new developments tend to one thing—cheapness. When the peasant's motor displaces, if it ever does, the great factory, it will be because it produces goods of a given quality at a lower price. Electricity will displace steam and gas entirely, only because, when we have discovered the cheapest way of generating it, it will cost less than either. At present we generate electric power largely by burning coal; we shall probably soon learn to do so by costless natural forces. When we do, the main motive power of industry will be vastly cheapened. With land monopolised by private persons, and rarely accessible to the actual producer of food, an even more vital necessity of industry is dear to us. But land, at least country land, or even town land in any place but London, should cost very little; for there is far more land in crowded England than is required to keep the people, if it were cultivated

in a scientific manner, while electric traction has rendered it quite needless for our manufacturing cities to be crowded together in the way they are. The tendency of civilisation is everywhere to enable us to produce the means of life more cheaply. Even in the Middle Ages food was so cheap that, according to Thorold Rogers, men were often given their food free, after the bargain for their ordinary wages was struck. It is becoming cheap again since the days of Free Trade, and the re-creation of rural life will certainly make it still cheaper. Instead of living in a world where the material needs of life are hard to obtain, the citizen of the future seems likely to be born into a society where work is well paid and living cheap. It will also be a world where it is impossible to become very rich. The two main motives that impel men to be grasping in material things will be gone—alike the fear of want and the hope of power. In the moral reactions resulting from such a change lies the hope of the Higher Socialism.

CHAPTER III

SOCIALISM AND MACHINERY

ANY change in the structure of society leads, no doubt, to corresponding changes in the outlook of the people upon life generally. A change in the industrial order implies a change in the general attitude towards politics, even to questions not specially industrial. This does not, as some alarmists infer, involve the break up of moral sanctions, which are the result, in the main, of prolonged race experience, and not of contemporary industrial arrangements. Socialism does not imply the destruction of the family, nor does it involve Atheism; it is the enemy of a system of Capitalism historically much later than either Monogamy or Christianity. Steam, machinery, individualist Liberalism, have together broken up the old order for us; it is the state of things provided by these, not the relics of what preceded them, that Socialism comes to destroy.

Yet, in many ways, the changed outlook will modify life, and that in every direction. In no one book, nor by any one man can the whole of its probable reactions be surveyed; but it is possible perhaps to show how the Socialist spirit may be expected to effect certain specific aspects of life,

leaving the reader free to apply the Socialist conception to as many more as he pleases. The remaining chapters must be read as my idea of the implications of Socialism on the various interests of modern life dealt with.

The Industrial Revolution, coming as it did to a society where the mass of the people had no power in the State and were not democratically organised, gave an opening for the unrestrained exploitation of society by successful private individuals. This, and the evils that resulted from it, are obviously at the bottom of modern organic and political Socialism, the central purpose of which is to make common property of that mechanism which is the creation of the Industrial Revolution.

It would be well, then, to examine the standpoint of individual Capitalism itself towards machinery. Briefly, private Capitalism regards machinery from only one point of view, that of cheapness, obtained by reducing the labour *time* essential to every process. Wherever and whenever a machine is invented, capable of producing a given quantity of work in sufficiently less *time* than an older process to save in wages a profit on the capital required to buy the machine, then the capitalist invests in that machine. The individual capitalist may, of course, be influenced by some other consideration, but such influences are variable, not constant, and do not spring from Capitalism itself. Here, as elsewhere, profit is the first and only capitalistic consideration; though the Factory Acts, humanitarian sentiment, or his own prejudice and want of

business ability may influence the individual capitalist.

This arises, in the main, from the fact that machinery has rarely belonged to the people who actually use it. The factory owner, not working in the factory itself, probably not knowing, and possibly not caring much, whether the process of manufacture is pleasant or unpleasant, has only one guide *always* present in his mind—that of financial economy—when any new invention is brought before him. He has been the almost undisputed director of industry for more than a century, and it is not, therefore, wonderful that this constant factor has been almost the only influence shaping the character of modern industry.

Yet this is by no means the only important consideration. Looked at from a human standpoint, machinery can do many other important services to men than merely enabling them to get through their work in a shorter time, or to do more in the same time. Take the cases of two trades. Various processes, based on photography, have, during the last half century, replaced the old method of engraving pictures on wood or metal, not perhaps altogether to the advantage of black-and-white illustration. Probably the old craft of Bewick was a pleasant one to follow. Men could live, if their wages were adequate, usefully and contentedly enough by it; and, cheapness apart, there could not be said to be any human reason for a change, unless to an artistically more perfect method of reproduction. I am not, for this reason,

protesting against more modern inventions. They too, for aught I know, may be interesting enough in the working; though I doubt whether they are altogether an improvement. My point is that there was no great human objection to the older method. The old craft was excellent training for the intelligence of those who worked at it. In our final judgment of the relative merits of the new and old, we should not only consider the questions of speed and cheapness, or even of art combined with these; we should weigh up also the humanising effect on those employed, and the influence of each method on their health. Of course, the ordinary business side of the question should not be ignored, but it is not the only consideration, nor indeed the most important.

Or, take the work of stone-breaking, such as is still largely done by hand in our workhouses and prisons to-day. Obviously, there is very little intelligence required here, nor is it conceivable that anyone can enjoy spending many years or even days at the work. Probably no one of my readers, if set to break a large quantity of stone by hand, but would be sick of his task before he had worked very long, and would be glad of any machine that would finish the whole for him in an hour. Working the stone-breaker would be, not only faster, but more intelligent and inspiring work than raising a hammer so many hundreds times an hour; and he would probably prefer to break twenty tons of stone by machine rather than one by hand.

In truth, human work may fairly be divided into

two classes—that which is elevating and generally more or less pleasant in the doing, and that which is essentially unintelligent and brutalising. Even apart from purely economic considerations, it is obviously desirable to do as much as possible of the latter by machinery. Thus the wind- or water-mill was a vast improvement on the hand-quern, and would have been so, to some extent, even if these once new inventions had been as slow as the older method. Grinding corn by hand is a monotonous and laborious task, fatiguing the body without giving any exercise to the mind; and the miller who "lived on a hill" would probably not have been "jolly" if he had been compelled to grind that way.

"Life without industry is guilt, industry without art is brutality," says Ruskin. If it be desirable to introduce machinery wherever its presence elevates toil from a lower to a higher plane of intelligence, machinery becomes a very doubtful benefit where it has the reverse effect. The inherent vice of Capitalism is, not that it has introduced too much machinery—on the contrary, it has failed to introduce machinery in numbers of places where a more human method of organising industry would have displaced hand work long ago—but that it has introduced it in obedience to one consideration only, that of profit-making.

It will appear, then, that it is not, from the human point of view, desirable to replace a process taking, say, six hours of pleasant work by one requiring only three of unhealthy or disagreeable

toil. From the purely commercial point of view, of course, it is a great advantage; and under a system of free and unrestricted competition, among those not actually engaged in the work, it is certain that, whatever the human loss involved, the cheaper form will in the end prevail. The manufacturers who first adopt a new labour-saving machine, however objectionable it may be in many ways, will oust any rivals who, from sentimental or other reasons, adhere to any older and more healthy or pleasant methods. In like manner, that inventor who busies his brain to discover a *cheaper* way of doing anything will stand a good chance of selling his invention to a pushing capitalist; if he wastes time and science merely on making something more easy and pleasant for the operative to work, his patent will be useless to him, and he may starve.

Were it not obvious enough that a change from the private control of machinery by people who do not work it themselves, to the public ownership of it by the people, many of whom do, must inevitably bring a great change in this respect, the progress of Socialism, so far as it has already gone, shows that communal production will no longer regard machinery solely from the point of view of cheapness. The communal ownership of gas, water, and tramways, contrasts with private, chiefly in this very respect. These things are, as has been often proved, generally financially profitable to the ratepayers who own them; yet the purely business side of the question has rarely, if ever,

been the only consideration with committees having the control of municipal trading concerns. Water, for instance, is usually less profitable to a municipality than gas, and the reason is probably that given here. Corporations would appear generally to give the chief advantage of a communal water supply to consumers, and of gas to the ratepayers. There is reason in this policy. It is clearly in the public interest to encourage the consumption of water. The cleanliness of the citizen's home and person are not purely private matters, but may readily influence the health and comfort of other people. It is not only desirable that the community should provide the people with water, but also that they should be persuaded to use it. An adequate water supply in each house would cause a great improvement in public health; and accordingly we find towns owning their own water supply are generally willing to sacrifice some of their profits in order to induce builders to lay the water on to as many houses as possible. But whether or not a citizen be a consumer of gas is not a matter of much concern to his neighbours; and, accordingly, while we find that municipal gas works usually compare favourably as regards price[1] with those run by private enterprise, the difference is not striking, and the local authorities that own gas works make handsome profits.

Again, when the citizen supplants the members of a trading company as a tramway shareholder,

[1] The average price of municipal gas is estimated to be about 3d. per thousand feet below that supplied by private enterprise.

he does not only consider the question of making a profit for the relief of the rates. In a moment, the whole aspect of the question broadens, from the profit-making to the human point of view. Conceivably the Tramway Committee may, as in the case of Huddersfield, even decide to grant such low fares and run such long distances as knowingly to make a loss. Cheap fares, which will open up the suburbs and avoid the development of overcrowded slums, may very well be worth paying for, even by a tramway rate; and the people may prefer to take their dividends in a better and cheaper service. A private company cannot consider the human aspects of the subject in this way. Its success or failure depends solely on the amount of money earned, and a bad service that pays is better than a good one leaving a loss.

It is so, right through the commercial world. A human being, once he or she is born, has to be kept somehow nowadays, either out of the wages of industry, by the assistance of friends, by private charity, or under the Poor Law. That person who is not paid for his labour enough to keep him alive, has generally to make up the deficit by one or more of these other means. This is what happens to a large extent in "sweated" trades; or, if the victims endeavour honestly to make their wages serve for the needs of life, the health of themselves and of their children suffers, and the general productive capacity of the nation falls in proportion. There are many industries, very profitable to their proprietors, which are virtually

kept going by concealed subventions from the public. Those who work at them are paid such low wages that they can only be maintained by the assistance of others, and cannot make any Trade Union or other provision for a "rainy day." So soon as they are driven out of employment, through ill-health or slackness, they come on the poor rate, and we call them "paupers." Essentially it is the factory owners in this kind of industry who are paupers. The community has not yet been willing to repair their worn-out machinery and buildings for them, and no doubt there would be an outcry if they demanded it should be done. Yet we allow them, without question, to hand over to the ratepayers those tools of industry, their workers, to do their "repairs" for them. A public authority is in a different position. It cannot make profit, in the communal sense of the word, by sweating. What is saved on the taxes or municipal rates by inadequate payment to workmen, tends to reappear in the poor rate. The ratepayer can only shift the burden from one shoulder to the other; he cannot get rid of it altogether.

This alone is adequate justification for insisting upon Trade Union conditions for all public employees. As a matter of fact, we find public tramway undertakings, for instance, generally far better employers of labour than private ones. There is a tendency, already marked, which will grow in the future, to insist that municipal authorities shall not wilfully manufacture paupers, by so paying their servants that they cannot make adequate provision

for themselves. In short, as communal enterprise replaces private, numberless social considerations are added to that alone considered in the past.

Now, almost the whole aim of inventors, since the introduction of machinery, has been devoted to the one end—cheapness to the manufacturer. This is a prostitution of science. Generally, lowly paid industries, where the work is of an unintelligent and degrading character, have been least disturbed by invention; because, where labour is cheap and submissive, there is little profit in displacing it by machinery. On the other hand, where wages are high, where skilled labour is required, invention is much more rapid; for there the profit of labour-saving machinery is great. It is true that, under pressure from law or Trade Unionism, many chemical and mechanical improvements have been effected, but these are exceptions among the inventions of a prolific age. Other motives have been variable and doubtful; this of finance regular and certain. Modern industry shows an astounding indifference to æsthetic, moral and humanitarian considerations, which has shocked the sense of intelligent people of all shades of opinion. Generally this has only led to sentimental laments about particular vandalisms committed by industrialism. Whole-hearted supporters of the present régime will plaintively protest against the defiling of a particular stream, or the degradation of some particular street. They do not realise that, in order to prevent the continual recurrence of such things, the aim of progress must be changed. The individual inventor

or manufacturer has a perfectly valid case as against a public that objects only to the particular vandalism that happens to be profitable to him.

To remedy the defects resulting from a century of invention, devoted to the consideration of private profit-making alone, we require a century of scientific invention from a communal point of view. Many of the outcries against mechanical and chemical inventions are really due to the fact that scientific invention has never had a fair chance. We shall not know how far æsthetics and machinery can be harmonised until mechanical inventors have become accustomed for a long time to take æsthetic considerations into account. The comfort of the workers will never be secured under machinery until the comfort of the workers is as much a consideration with those who make machines, as speed and economy of production. No one can possibly say what the results of two or three generations of invention steadily devoted to serving *all* the human possibilities of life, instead of only one of them, might be. The spread of local and national Socialism assures us this will be tried. The private enterprise tramcar, with its hideous advertisements, and the corporation cars, which, generally at some financial sacrifice, exclude them, are visible indications of the coming change. One of the great human benefits of communal enterprise is that it gives a new direction to the thoughts of the age; it makes science the servant, not of the capitalists, but of the people.

But if Socialism will, for the first time, show us

what machinery and science can do for us, it will also let us understand what they *cannot* do for us. Capitalism has not only paid little heed to the kinds of machinery desirable for humanity; it has also never realised that machinery, like other things, is not a universal boon, but has only its due place, however important, in life. It is difficult to harmonise the conceptions of Socialism current among non-Socialists with the prominence given by many in the movement itself to artistic handicraft. Many of the most famous English Socialists have been as interested in the work of such organisations as the Arts and Crafts Society as in the political movement itself,—in advocating decentralisation of industry as an attempt to democratise the control of machinery. This tendency has been valuable to the Socialist movement itself as a means of preventing it becoming too Philistine and materialistic, as, indeed, it might readily have done without this unexpected alliance. Nevertheless, there is a curious clash of ideas, on the face of it, between those who regard the gradual centralisation of industry going on under Capitalism as a preparation for Socialism, and those who advocate something of a return to individualism in manufacture. How can the apparent conflict be reconciled?

In truth, I think we have here the first germs of the Higher Socialism that may develop after the completion of the present political movement. "That which is useful should be produced by the community, by machinery; that which is beautiful, by the individual and by hand," has been given as the

method of the future. Many things we buy are capable of beauty; and if such are all to be produced "by the individual and by hand," there must obviously be a great return, some day or other, to earlier methods of manufacture. If that is so, the limits of *State* Socialism will be narrower than many advocates expect or opponents fear. It is the centralisation of industry, with the consequent tendency to form monopolies, that is forcing forward State Socialism, and rendering it easy for the public to control it. Any check on the centralising tendency seems at least to imply a check on the collectivist tendency which is its result. Yet the establishment of decent minimum conditions of Labour by corporate action would, if present indications count for anything, almost certainly lead to a revival of handicraft work. The æsthetic movement of the early eighties, the Arts and Crafts movement of to-day, and the growing preference for "hand-made" goods, are signs of a widespread revolt, among people who can afford such things, against the products of machinery. The more cultivated his taste, the more imperatively a man demands individual beauty and imagination in his surroundings; and people with money have a better chance of cultivating, among other things, their æsthetic taste. Of course the majority of well-to-do people are perfectly satisfied to do as their fathers did in the days before Ruskin and Morris. In so far as their houses differ from the Early Victorian type, they do so because fashion has filled the best shops with furniture of a better design than was common twenty

years ago. Taste apart, however, a certain economic standing is necessary to any consideration of the subject. The houses of some Labour leaders whose lives have thrown them into contact with artistic revolutionaries, occasionally show the influence of the movement, while some working people have tastefully furnished small houses. But usually people who marry under £150 a year cannot, even if they would, consider æsthetics at all. First food, then reasonable comfort, then beauty, that is the inevitable, and indeed the right order with men and women. The workers will only care enough for beauty when the earlier needs are satisfied.

But of course working people are made of much the same stuff as others. Some love beauty; some like to be thought to do so; most are led at least by the fashion. The levelling up of the workers' condition, economic and educational, to that of the middle classes must necessarily bring them under the influences that have made the æsthetic revival. The demand for handicraft will arise among them with the means to satisfy it. The people may not at first buy many "hand-made" things, but they will buy some, not very wisely at first, but with growing insight afterwards. They will become aware of the latest ideas on handicraft, and form a guild. There is an essential love for this sort of work in many, though not—*pace* Mr. Godfrey Blount—in all young men and women. Thus, with greater leisure and better pay, we may confidently look for a vast revival of handicrafts, partly undertaken as a means of

making a living, partly by ingenious men and women alike, as "hobbies" for their leisure hours. At first most of this work will be like most of that done now, amateurish and unschooled; but it is not likely, from the first, to be deficient in quantity. Given the opportunity and the means, it is probable the lovers of handicraft, amateur and professional, will, ere long, provide for more things than can be used. As art becomes educated, they will become good things, too; good enough, when it has become disciplined by tradition and education, to delight the heart of the collector of our days. Yet of what value in the markets of the future? I suspect soon very little. We have here a department of industry in which men want to work, even when there is no pay attached to it, not to avoid work. The gradual increase in the quantity of hand-made things will tend to render it increasingly difficult to sell any but the best, aided as the tendency will be by the marked liking such people have for making presents of the things they design.

It must be remembered that such a development would take place alongside of a steady increase in that feeling of social unity, the civic spirit, which increases with the growth of social work. The nation, the city, the village, with the extension of their industrial functions, coming more closely into and filling ever a greater part in the lives of the people, would be reviving that ancient communal pride that makes the cities of Greece and Italy beautiful even in their ruins. I fancy, in the

future, men may see art free, because it is too abundant to command any price, because there are no millionaires to tempt the artist, nor no fear of penury to coerce him. The lesser art will be given as the tributes of friendship; the greater, as offerings to the city in which the artist lives. To have been allowed to decorate the village hall, to present a picture to the city gallery, will be the ambition, in the days to be, of the craftsman, secure of life and hopeless of luxury.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIALISM AND THE REFORM OF THE LIQUOR TRAFFIC

PROBABLY no needed reform is so hampered by the unreason of its advocates as that of the liquor traffic. An important part of the great general movement towards social reform, the Temperance agitation appeared too early, as a thing born out of due time, in the age of Liberal criticism, not that of social reconstruction. Its pioneers had become accustomed, in other fields, to the work of pulling down outworn institutions; they were unused to that of building new ones. Fortunately for themselves, perhaps, they were not generally political philosophers, or they might have been sorely troubled to reconcile their particular proposals with regard to the liquor traffic with the general principles of contemporary Liberalism, though most of them were Liberals. It was on humanitarian grounds, because of a moral revolt against a monstrous evil, that these pioneers, enthusiastic everywhere else for liberty and even licence, were, in this one thing alone, in favour of restriction. Working in a strange field, their efforts in constructive politics were amateurish; and it is perhaps not wonderful that, in spite of

the efforts of Mr. Rowntree and others, the trail of the amateur in constructive politics is over the Temperance movement even yet.

In recent years, the immediate problems of advanced politics have become constructive rather than critical, and a race of constructive politicians has arisen, to whom the methods of the late Sir Wilfrid Lawson and his school seem strangely crude. The teetotallers are concerned with one of the gravest social evils of the day. To this no earnest social reformer can be blind, but there is little to encourage the modern-minded reformer in the present aspect of the movement. Two fierce fanaticisms, the "Trade" as a vested interest and the teetotallers as an organised party, wage a ceaseless and uncompromising strife. Each has "captured" one of the great parties in the State, and while compelling its reluctant ally to give a nominal support to its own demands, helps to prevent any real progress.

It would not matter so much were it not that the conflict results almost entirely in victories for the less reputable of the combatants, the Trade. It is the nature of fanaticism to defeat its own end, to reject useful compromises, and hail with delight apparent victories that are in reality defeats. So it is with the Temperance movement. The political activity of the Temperance party has not yet obtained for it any really effective concession. The teetotallers have overlooked one of the cardinal facts of the position. In fighting the drink traffic, they are not merely at war with the publicans, and the share-

holders in breweries, but with the whole body of citizens, including themselves, in the capacity of taxpayers. Drink is a vested interest, in which not only the Trade, but the State itself is concerned. This fact is the most formidable of all obstacles to progress, yet the most conspicuous apparent successes of the teetotal party have only tended to increase the dependence of the State on the liquor traffic.

About one-fourth of the national revenue is, at the present moment, derived from the liquor traffic. Now, no reform that does not lead to a decrease of consumption, or, in other words, a falling off in this revenue, is worth anything. Local veto, high licence, disinterested management, municipal control, are at best only means to this end. If he did not believe that his favourite method would really reduce consumption, no reasonable Temperance reformer would waste his time on any one of them. Yet any reform reducing the drinking habits of the nation to reasonable dimensions, much more "the total and immediate abolition of the liquor traffic," as advocated by the statesmen of the United Kingdom Alliance, would utterly disorganise the finance of the nation. Any considerable falling off in the liquor traffic would involve one of two things—a drastic cutting down of our national expenditure all round, or an equivalent increase of revenue from some other source. Thus the direct interest of the Trade itself is fenced round by a host of subordinate vested interests, all firmly rooted in society. The Army and Navy, the Civil Service, all interested in education, even the holders

of Consols, have a natural tendency to resist any great shrinkage in the revenue of the State. The payers of income-tax and the millionaires may, on the other hand, be trusted to oppose any attempt to make up the deficit caused by a declining liquor revenue by any new calls on incomes or estates; the Free Trader will resist any resort to Protection; the consumers of tea, coffee, and sugar will cry out against any increase in the breakfast-table duties. Nor would the discontent end here. If the liquor revenues fell off, all the advocates of social reforms would find their pet schemes brought to a standstill; there would be outcries everywhere, not against the decline of the liquor traffic, but against its inevitable consequences.

Thus it comes about that there is a curious difference between the conduct of the two great parties to the allies who have "captured" them. The Conservatives are friends of the publican in deed but not in will; the Liberals allies of the Temperance party in will but not in deed. The Tory Churchman, himself perhaps a Temperance advocate, is by no means proud of his convenient, but compromising ally, but on the whole he protects his interests well enough. Liberal Nonconformity, on the other hand, is rather proud of its associates, only, during an alliance that has now lasted for a generation, it has never done anything of importance for them. Nor until the Temperance party have some new ideas to suggest, is it likely they ever will. No Chancellor of the Exchequer, it is safe to say, will willingly lose the revenues he derives from the Trade, and face the

unpopular task of looking elsewhere for means to make up the consequent deficit.

Yet this dependence of British finance on the liquor traffic has been built up largely by means of the Temperance vote. Any Chancellor of the Exchequer can readily count on the support of the Temperance party for an increase in the liquor duties. It is well, therefore, to consider what happens when fiscal necessities lead to such a step. The Chancellor of the Exchequer proposing, and the Temperance members supporting such a tax, are obviously mainly actuated by different motives: the Chancellor desires to obtain money to meet his deficit; the teetotallers wish to reduce the consumption of liquor by making it dearer. These aims are mutually exclusive. If to any material extent the increased taxation fulfils the hopes of the Temperance party, it will disappoint those of the Chancellor; if, on the other hand, the Chancellor gets his money, it will be because the nation has become no more sober. But the Chancellor is almost certainly right. His Budget has only been submitted after consultation with a competent staff of officials, who have convinced themselves that the proposed increases will not cause any great falling off in the consumption. The cool judgment of experts is pitted against the instinctive fanaticism which impels the Temperance man to hit out at the brewer whenever he fancies he sees a chance. The result is almost a foregone conclusion; but if the hopes of the Temperance party ever are realised, we may be sure it will be for the first and last time. No Chancellor of the Exchequer will ever repeat an experiment that brings

him face to face with a second deficit in two years, as would be the case if the new tax, by reducing the consumption of alcohol, failed to fill his coffers. He will only oblige the drink taxers so long as he gets more money by doing so; that is, so long as they will co-operate in binding the State yet more firmly to the drink traffic.

The Temperance advocates of high liquor taxes are, in truth, guilty of errors both economic and moral. Normally, if you add to the price of a thing you decrease the consumption, and to some extent the general rule applies in the case of alcohol. Clearly, if beer were half a crown a glass, poor people could rarely get too much. Incidentally, there would be little revenue from liquor taxes, and we may be sure the duties on beer and spirits will never rise to such an extent as to prohibit the sale. But the general rule depends on the fact that people will not buy more of a thing than they can afford, a rule that by no means applies in the case of alcohol. There are two classes among the consumers of alcohol, and I doubt whether either would take more than he does now if the prices of liquor were reduced one-half. The self-respecting moderate drinker would not get drunk, if beer were free; while the dipsomaniac can and does take as much as he can carry, even at present prices. To the sot, his craving for drink has the first claim on his wages; after that is satisfied, his wife and children may get the rest. I doubt if an increase in the price of liquor would make the home of the drunkard less drunken; it would only render yet more pitifully inadequate the

remnant of his wages left for food and clothing. A drunkard goes from work to the public-house with his wages, and stays there till he can drink no more, or until he is turned out; his wife has to manage on what is left. If the liquor with which he has brutalised himself is cheap, so much the better, if dear, so much the worse, for her. We are dealing not with reasonable beings, who weigh and consider the prices of things, but with semi-lunatics, who will sacrifice everything to satisfy a brutal appetite.

Brutal as he is, however, even the drunkard has his rights. One of these is the right to be charged only his fair share of the expenses of the nation. As a class, the consumers, unlike the sellers of alcohol, are not competent to look after their own political interests. They are not politically organised, —indeed, for the most part they are incapable of organisation,—and can offer little resistance to unjust taxation. The Trade is politically powerful, and licence duties, which should fall in the main on the privileged liquor seller, are in consequence light; the teetotallers are also competent politicians, and can offer a stout resistance to food taxes; the income-tax payer finances parties, and only in cases of necessity will Government meddle with him. The result is that the drunkard is liable to all the taxes other men with similar incomes pay, and, in addition, is taxed on his favourite vice. I wish the Temperance party could realise the combined folly and immorality of this. We have all, except the Tariff reformers, learnt by now the sound maxim that we must not tax the necessities of the people; I wish we equally

understood that we must not make revenue out of their vices. Were I of opinion, as some are, that even moderate drinking is a vice, I should oppose the raising of *any* revenue from the liquor trade; as it is, I look with grave apprehension at the growing dependence of the State on the traffic. We shall never be able to act in any effective way until our hands are more free than at present, any more than New York can deal effectively with gambling and prostitution so long as the Tammany police receive commissions from gaming houses and brothels. A British Chancellor of the Exchequer is a more respectable official than a Tammany policeman, but he is in much the same position. It is always the instinct of a vicious trade to build up for itself a vested interest in the State; it is rare that the political blindness of its opponents seconds its efforts. This, however, the British teetotallers have done, and one-fourth of our national income is derived from the trade whose abolition they profess to desire.

But there is another, even more serious, way in which the liquor duties offend against the true principles of finance. The only just way to levy taxes is according to ability; they should never be determined by the manner in which the taxpayer elects to spend a given income. This is the moral argument for direct taxation, which can and should be adjusted to fall most heavily on those who can afford to pay. We may condemn the drunkard, we may restrain and punish him if we like, but we have no right, because he is a drunkard, to shift part of our

share of the taxes on to his shoulders. Each citizen should bear his fair share, according to his means, and only according to his means, of the national burdens. To make anyone else pay more, with the effect of making our own burden less, is profoundly immoral; and the fact that we so readily take advantage of the drinkers' inability to organise, of their political incapacity, throws an unpleasant light on the character of British respectability. The respectable British citizen compares, indeed, rather badly with the Pharisee in the parable. His *Apologia*, if he were candid enough to utter it, would read something like this :—" Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men, thriftless, immoral, unclean, or even as this drunkard. I pay three-fourths of my share of the taxes, and make him pay all of his and the deficit on mine. I abhor his ways, and admonish him continually. Nevertheless, I am charitable, and spend much of the money saved on my taxes to provide him with lectures and pamphlets." This is not an unfair, but a true picture of the position. Were we to abolish the liquor taxes, which fall only on one class of people, we should be compelled to impose the burden on some privileged class or on society at large. As long as we fail to do this, the respectable man is shirking his due share of the national burdens.

The whole question is beset with difficulties, and I can only give some tentative hints as to possible reform. To the rigid abstainer, who thinks even moderate drinking vicious, I fear the problem will appear hopeless. The British elector, in his capacity

of taxpayer, has virtually become a sleeping partner in the drink traffic; and we may be sure he will make short work of any Government that surrenders his share or destroys the trade that gives it value, unless it also devises some equally easy way of raising money. A rise all round in the other taxes, enough to compensate the Treasury for any material falling off in the liquor revenues, would raise up countless allies for the Trade in every constituency. The respectable citizen would not revolt against the measures restricting drinking, very often he would highly commend them, but against their inevitable consequences—the new taxes; and the result, from the Government's point of view, would be the same.

But to him who recognises that the use of alcohol has hitherto been nearly universal in Western civilisation, the position is not so hopeless. Asceticism of any kind has never taken organic root in the West. The basic idea of Western ethics is that of the "golden mean," the notion that everything in life is good in the use, evil only in the abuse. This general attitude to life is, I believe, the root cause of Western progressivism, and is a valuable and indestructible asset of our civilisation. Sexual licence may provoke, even in the West, a monastic or other celibate movement as a protest; the prevalence of drunkenness may give rise to such a movement as modern teetotalism; but such a long-continued rejection of one of the simpler joys of life as Mohammedan lands reveal is, I believe, impossible in Europe. Where, as in Southern lands,

excess is rare, there is not, and probably never will be, any total abstinence movement. It was the gross sexual licence of Southern Europe during Roman and mediæval times that made celibacy a virtue; the unhealthy ethic never flourished, and was quickly abandoned among the more continent nations of the North. Asceticism, when it appears in the West, does so as a protest against the abuse and not the use of things, however extravagantly the more enthusiastic supporters of the movement may sometimes speak and feel. With the reduction of drinking to the extent to which it is carried on in Mediterranean lands, will come, I am convinced, a Mediterranean indifference to the whole question. The drunkard and the teetotaller are essential to one another; when the one ceases, the other will also, for the West only pronounces a thing evil when it has visible proof that it is so. Puritanism is the temporary intrusion of the Eastern ethic of renunciation into an alien world, a very useful intrusion sometimes, but one never fully assimilated by the moral constitution of the West.

I believe the Temperance movement can never succeed in the object of some of its advocates—total abolition. The movement derives its strength from the need for protest against *excessive* drinking; it will lose all its driving force so soon as, if ever, the national vice of excess has disappeared or been reduced very greatly. If this be so, practical politics must be confined to the reduction of excess. And certainly the excess of the British people is monstrous enough. One-tenth of the annual income

of our nation is spent on alcoholic liquors, and no reasonable person would deny that we drink twice, probably four times, as much as is good for us. The State has every reason to exercise a restraining influence on this excess, every right to seek a free hand to deal with it effectively. To do this, we must get rid of our abject financial dependence on the liquor revenues; we must make a shrinkage in the sale of intoxicants a matter of no more direct importance to the Chancellor of the Exchequer than a reduced trade in beef and bread. We must no longer corrupt the virtuous taxpayer who drinks only lemonade, by making the moderate drinker and the drunkard pay more than their fair share of the taxes. When we have done these things, we shall have our hands free as never before to deal with the great problem of national intemperance, for we shall be able to ally with us the whole taxpaying public.

The Labour Party, with its constructive attitude towards politics, seems to me the only body that can help us here. Conservatism is virtually committed to the defence of the Trade; Liberalism promises merely its restraint, a thing which, as I have shown, can never proceed very far, in a State suffering from an eternal lack of peace as ours does. A party that will boldly seek out new revenues independent of calls on the taxpayer, a party not committed to the support of either of the contending factions, may provide an answer to the problem impossible to the older political organisations. And, as it happens, the only solution conceivable to me

is a very wide extension of the principle of Socialism, so as to include, not only the public control of the drink traffic, but of all those varied industries, cafés, eating-houses, the provision of rooms for meetings, public dinners, dances, and concerts, for billiards and other games, as well as the accommodation of travellers, which are associated, in a greater or lesser degree, with that of drinking. Socialism on an extensive scale provides the answer to the drink problem among others.

The first thing is to retrace our steps into the way of common honesty; we must treat even the drunkard fairly. It may be right to put the drunkard in an asylum or in a prison, it might even be excusable to remove him from the world as a public nuisance; the one thing we have no right to do is to rob him, and by so doing weave his very vice into the fabric of society, so that it becomes the problem of problems to extricate ourselves again. Unfortunately, we cannot forego the liquor revenues all at once, without causing a revolt of the taxpayers strong enough to defeat our aims. But if we cannot at once get rid of the liquor taxes, we can transfer them from an unhappy and non-privileged class to a privileged one, from the drinkers to the licence-holders.

Protected from outside competition by the action of the Licensing Laws, almost as perfectly as the landowner is by the impossibility of manufacturing land, the licence-holder enjoys a virtual monopoly to which, it seems to me, the accepted economics of land apply very closely. The

maxim that "rent does not enter into price" requires to be accepted with some reserve,[1] but, in so far as it is valid, what applies to economic rent applies equally to the monopoly value of licences. Indirect taxes on beer and spirits "enter into price"; direct taxes on the annual value of licences, in the main, do not. If, then, we transferred, at once or by convenient stages, the liquor taxes from beer and spirits on to licences, until the full economic value of the latter came into the coffers of the State, we should probably cheapen or improve the liquor sold in our public-houses, but we should do three important things—we should make our system of taxation vastly more honest, we should weaken the political power of the Trade, and we should render it relatively easy to buy out any liquor-seller whose licence we desired to municipalise or extinguish.

But we should still depend as much as ever on the liquor revenues; the hands of the State would still be tied. To free them finally there is only one way—to discover another source of revenue which may be gradually substituted for the liquor taxes, without provoking a revolt from the taxpayer or starving the national revenue. Were an adequate alternative income obtainable and earmarked for this purpose, it would be possible gradually to reduce the number of public-houses to the reasonable requirements of a sober people, and to regulate those that remained. If, in short, we could give the taxpayer an adequate com-

[1] See Mr. J. A. Hobson's *Problem of Distribution*.

pensation for his vested interest in the liquor traffic, our greatest difficulty would be removed.

This, I believe, can be done by restoring the "public-house" to its rightful place in our social system, and placing it, so restored, under the direct control of the community. What the public-house of the future may be like, we can get an idea by comparing those of the past and the present. The old village inn was a "public-house" in a very real sense of the phrase. It was at once guest-house, concert hall, and place of general refreshment, not only alcoholic. There the farmers discussed crops and drove bargains; there the village politicians wrangled over politics; there the youths decided matches at skittles or quoits. Whatever of the life of the village hovered on that wide borderland between the private family life and the more formal things of public life, centred in the village inn. It was, indeed, as essential to the secular life of the village as the Church to its religious life; the main defect of the inn being that of all English public and semi-public institutions, that it virtually excluded women. To a perfect society, such an institution is essential. Even the family has its business side, the formal duties to one another and their children, of a hard-working husband and wife. But it is the lighter amenities of family life, the constant exchange of services "not written in the bond," the familiar nothings of the day, that make of a "house" a "home." We want something to do all this for our social life. No institution

of our day is sufficiently "catholic," if I may use the expression, for the purpose. The city bar is a mere parody of what a public-house should be, a sort of X-ray photograph of it, with all its kindly human features lost, and only a ghastly skeleton remaining. The restaurant, the café, the hotel, the music hall, the news-room, have divided among them the functions of the old inn. Many of these specialised developments have become trades in themselves, some perhaps hardly less profitable than that in drink.

I believe that it is not enough to socialise the public-house, we must recover for it its ancient catholic character. Neither puritanism nor licence are really good things, and it is not well when people with a tendency to either associate only with those of like tastes. The temperance café and the public bar, each with its regular customers who never mingle, is to me the outer sign of a deep spiritual schism in society between those who err on one or the other side of the golden mean of life. Those who sin through lack of restraint are more visibly anti-social in their conduct; but the Founder of Christianity seems to have considered the opposite or puritan tendency had even graver spiritual dangers. Manhood and womanhood are best developed by a catholic intercourse with varied and opposite temperaments, such as may be obtainable in the public guest-houses of the future, but not in either the "pubs" or the coffee-houses of to-day.

But if the stock of an early brewer made Dr.

Johnson speak of "the potentiality of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice," what would he have thought of the whole business of catering for the refreshment and recreation of a nation? If, instead of specialising the "inn" until it becomes a mere drinking "bar," we develop the possibilities of the latter until it becomes the centre of a varied social life; if, taking the thing into our own hands, we supply, not only intoxicants, but refreshments of all kinds; if we provide rooms for games, meetings, socials, theatricals; if we make of our true "public-house" a home for music and for exhibitions of art and science,—we make of it a thing that will appeal to the whole nation, not merely a self-indulgent class. The wealth-earning possibilities of the Trade would be vastly increased by such a change, and we might free ourselves from that financial dependence on the bar counter which is our greatest hindrance to reform. The more of other trade we do, the less will we depend on this, and the more drastically can we deal with its abuses.

It is in the gradual revival, under communal ownership and adapted to modern conditions, of the old inn that I see the best prospect of checking intemperance. The State should gradually take, by taxation, all, or nearly all, the monopoly value of the licences granted, and use the money thus obtained, not as an additional revenue, but as a substitute for the present taxes on intoxicants. The local governing bodies should be first allowed, afterwards compelled, to take over the actual

management of the retail traffic. They should be encouraged to expand the original idea of the inn, as a meeting-place for rest, refreshment, and social intercourse, in every direction possible to our complex modern life. The process of over-specialisation should be reversed. The "potman" should become the "victualler," and he again should develop into "mine host," whose business it is to esteem no human thing foreign to him. Then indeed, when, all things bought, we make our due and nearly equal profit, we shall be able to restrain the excessive trade in one; then we may be able to merge again in unity the Puritan and the Cavalier, to the benefit of both. But this thing can never be done by those who seek the suppression of either—each has got something to teach the other. And, valuable as are the things which later civilisation has added to our choice of meats and drinks, I should not be surprised if, when excessive drinking has become a thing forgotten, the accepted media of human unity, in things temporal, as in things spiritual, should be bread and wine.

CHAPTER V

SOCIALISM AND FREEDOM

THE advent of a Socialistic party in the House of Commons raises again the old question of the relation of Socialism to individual liberty. That it would restrict or even abolish personal freedom is, of course, the oldest objection to Socialism, an objection which, let it be admitted, has received colour from the proposals of many earnest State Socialists. In how far is such a complaint justifiable, if at all? And how far can State Socialism be so modified as to secure as wide or wider freedom than exists to-day?

In the first place, it may be premised that freedom is not a negative, but a positive thing. There is no law or regulation to prevent any man going to the moon, and yet it would be a mere absurdity to say that a man was "free" to travel there. If we regard freedom as mere absence of restraint, no one is quite free until he is dead, when all human statutes and regulations cease to have any control over him. Yet it is obvious that freedom implies life; it implies, not only the absence of legal restraint, but the presence of power. It is a thing not purely abstract, but existing only in relation to other things. We are free to walk, to eat, to dress ourselves, to attend

to our daily business; we are not free to do anything our imaginations may suggest, unless those imaginations work within the limits of our personal capacity.

Now the whole aim of the Labour and Socialist movement is to increase the extent of this freedom. The Trade Unionist strikes for better pay or shorter hours, in order that he may be able to obtain or do things for which at present he has neither time nor money. In a similar way, the Social reformer advocates Old Age Pensions, in order that the poor may be able to spend their declining years in the way most pleasing to them, to free them from the option of the workhouse or starvation; and the proper feeding of school children, in order that they may have the physical strength and education necessary to do many things possible only to the strong and intelligent. Other things being equal, the strong man is more free than the weak; for a multitude of things are possible to him which the other cannot hope to do. The *intention*, at least, of Socialism is to increase freedom, by bringing the possibilities of civilised life to all.

And here we come face to face with the apparent paradox that the civilised man, governed by a code of laws, complex and detailed to the last degree, has far more freedom than the savage, unruled hunter of the forests. To the one, far more is possible than the other. If he be not too poor, he can travel to the ends of the earth; he can communicate in a few hours with his friends at the Antipodes; he can study the literatures and art of the world; he can exercise his talents in many occupations that have no

existence in a more primitive society. As civilisation becomes more complex, more highly regulated, wider and wider possibilities appear. The pirate and the brigand are suppressed; but the absence of violence will itself enable hundreds of professions and trades to take their places, each offering scope to some hitherto latent faculty of man.

Man is a creature having possibilities far beyond his achievements. This is so in all societies; we conceive of, and would like to do numbers, of things that are entirely beyond our power. We are restrained by two despotisms of very unequal potency—nature and society. The solitary savage may have great ability, he may indeed be a genius, but left alone with nature, it is utterly impossible for him to give utterance to the thing he conceives. In order that he may even shape it into words, he must be a member of some social order, have command of some language. Even then, his powers, merely of expression, are limited by the capacity of the language he knows. The works of Shakespeare presuppose more than the genius of Shakespeare; they presuppose the powers of the English tongue, the civilisation of the Elizabethan age. Had Shakespeare been born among the Hottentots, his name must have perished. His life would have been one long struggle with material things; at most, he could have added to the songs and dances of his tribe some jewels of unusual brightness for the collection of the student of folk-song. The work of Darwin, in like manner, presupposes more than Darwin's personal care and

patience. Before *The Origin of Species* could appear, hundreds of other investigators must explore, and painfully increase the common stock of nature knowledge. None of his books could well have been written a generation before they actually were; and it is no mere coincidence that Dr. Russel Wallace and he hit upon the same theory at the same time. Natural science had slowly and painfully advanced to a position from which the great generalisation could be made. It is probable enough, had neither of them been born, we should have had their theory from someone else long before now.

The point of all this is, that it is society that gives civilised man the opportunities of life, the basis from which arises all possibility of freedom. The mere absence of law is not freedom. There is, in the real sense of the word, far more freedom under the most cruel of modern despotism than under the licence of savagery. The despotism of nature is the most complete of all, except that of the grave.

Now the purpose of society is to free man progressively from the tyranny of nature, to enable him to attain an ever higher self-realisation. As civilisation progresses, security for life becomes greater, and without life there can be no freedom. Gradually, humanity stores up a common stock of knowledge, a greater command over nature, so that where nature was at one time the tyrant of man, she becomes his servant. As time goes on, numberless things, at one time impossible, however desirable, become easy and common. Generations of men gradually train the brutes to service, and evolve domestic types of

animals and plants, obedient and not hostile to mankind. The discoveries of one man become known throughout society, and the chance invention of an individual, instead of being lost in isolation, benefits all generations. Skilled crafts arise, and the worker in wood or stone or metal gains hints from tradition, without which his instinct for the beauty of line or colour could never express itself. The growing needs of civilised life give opportunities and training to the intellect, and men become really free to pursue medicine, the law, theology, science, politics, literature, and art. It would be mockery to say that the savage, however great his natural talent for such things, was free to pursue any of these. Such freedom of self-realisation as these men enjoy is the fruit of organisation and law.

Law and social convention, often, be it admitted, cruel and barbarous in themselves, are nevertheless milder expedients by which man frees himself, to some extent, from the overwhelming despotism of nature. Self-realisation is absolutely impossible to the savage, unless the self to be realised differs little from that of the brute; and freedom is the opportunity of self-realisation. It is this fact that makes even the most foolish or brutal government better than anarchy. Even in Russia, one can think and read, travel and learn a trade or profession. Absence of law or custom, with its inevitable consequence the dissolution of society, would leave those Russians who could manage to preserve an existence as pure individualists under a more helpless tyranny than that of the Tzar.

Now the aim of Socialism is to give to the *whole* people that positive basis of freedom already attained to by society. We have been speaking hitherto about the greater freedom of the civilised man over the savage, but we must remember that all men have not the opportunities of civilisation, while only a very few of them have them to any great extent. The child of the slums is not more free than the child of the savage. A civilisation in which he has no share hems him round on every side,—a civilisation, to the human within him, more stern and arid than the barbarism of nature herself. The restraint of law presses far less heavily on the poor than the poverty which is their destruction. The struggle for material necessaries is far more desperate and insistent among the poor than in the wilderness; and it is from the struggle for material things that it is the business of society to emancipate the soul of man.

Apart from the despotism of nature, however, there are other tyrannies from which the progress of social rules tends to free mankind. State law is not the only form of human "government." If we look at the matter frankly, we shall see that "government" is a much older thing than the State, or even than humanity. Right throughout the world, the stronger rules the weaker; and whenever two things meet, the stronger, physically or mentally, will rule, however kindly or cruelly. In a pure anarchy nothing could prevent the despotism of parents, for instance, except the interference of stronger neighbours. Now, in cases of cruelty or neglect of children, the State is "the neighbours" organised. The State is stronger

than the parents, and can legally interfere to limit their authority. But such interference is not necessarily an extension of government, in the widest sense; it is the check imposed by one authority on the abuse of another, exercised in the interest of the individual freedom of the child. The Factory Acts were an extension of the "sphere" of the State intended to protect the freedom of the individual. As already said, life is essential to freedom; and, in order that the factory children might be free, it was necessary they should continue to exist. With better health and education the possible bounds of freedom become wider—there become more things which it is definitely possible, instead of merely theoretically permissible to do; for freedom always refers to things possible only, and not to those impossible. In so far, then, as the Factory Acts tended to secure life and health to the children, as well as to obtain for them some elements of education, they rendered freedom possible; and they did so, not by ruling over the individuals chiefly concerned, the children, but by limiting the authority of the factory owners and parents who were oppressing them.

Similarly, wise Labour legislation, Trade Unionism, and other efforts of the kind towards betterment, though extensions of the rule of the social will, are not necessarily restrictions on freedom. They are substitutions of conscious human regulation for the tyranny of circumstances. A Trades Unionist does not join his Union because he wants to be governed, but because he wants to escape from the tyranny

of his conditions, to have some say in the ordering of the place in which he works, for the greater freedom secured by better wages and shorter hours. To secure these advantages, the rules and subscriptions of his union are a mild burden, willingly paid. For the same reason, he demands legal regulation of the hours and conditions of his labour. He is unable to obtain these things himself, however much he wants them. He is not free, because he is powerless. His demand is not for law to restrict him from doing what he wants, but to emancipate him from the necessity of doing what he does not want.

Looking over the broad field of industry, the Socialist sees "the means of production, distribution, and exchange" virtually in the hands and under the control of a relatively small section of the people. Only on the conditions most profitable to the holders of land and capital can the bulk of the people earn their daily bread, while some of them cannot get an opportunity to earn it at all. The landless, moneyless man has to live in a house designed by other people, to work in a factory the regulations of which have been made entirely by other people, for hours determined by a common rule, in the making of which he has not been consulted. He can legally refuse to work, if he likes, individually by giving notice to leave, collectively by striking, if he disapproves of the conditions of employment. If he does, too probably he will be forced by hunger to come back in sullen discontent on the old terms; he will certainly be

compelled, at best, to accept some slight improvement far short of what he would like. Let no man imagine this is not government. The regulations stuck up in a factory, the rules a railway company makes for its employees, or the bye-laws for its traffic, are as much government, though issued by a private firm, as if enacted by a Socialist State or Municipality. The difference between freedom and tyranny consists, not in who makes the rules, but in the kind of rules made. As long as work is carried on by many men in common, there must be a common rule of work. Men, on the progress of whose work that of other workers depends, cannot start when they like and knock off when they like—that kind of individualism was rendered impossible for all time by the Industrial Revolution. But men who have a voice in deciding what that common rule shall be, and who are able to make a rule to allow of the fullest life and health to themselves, consistent with the due fulfilment of their work, are far more free than those whose common rule is dictated to them by others.

It is just because this is so, that the Labour Party exists. Men do not struggle to enslave themselves—their efforts are always directed to obtain more freedom. That man only is free who has the economic basis of freedom, whose wages enable him to live a full and civilised life. Without that, the advantages of civilisation, as far as he is concerned, had better not exist at all; he would then be saved from much envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness. That which you cannot afford to do you

are not free to do, by a law just as exacting as any sumptuary regulation of the State. In former times, the State made many laws to limit the amount people of a given condition might spend on clothes and ornaments. These laws have been blamed as absurd restrictions on human liberty. Yet in all times there were probably many people in no danger of similar excess, even without any law to restrain them, because they had neither money nor credit. Were they less or more "free" than those who could at least buy many things unforbidden by the law? Freedom to enjoy comes with ability to buy, and theoretic freedom beyond that is as meaningless as a man's right to travel to the moon. Freedom is an abstract noun, but there is no such thing as abstract freedom; it is always freedom to do some definite thing. A too abstract view of freedom has disguised from many the true meaning of the progress of law. In so far as it is real progress, it is a continuous extension of human liberty.

If our view of freedom is often too abstract, our conception of society is too mechanical. Society is an organism, not a mere aggregation of individuals. The "spheres" of the State and of the individual are not such that, as one increases, the other must necessarily diminish. On the contrary, as the functions of the State, wisely directed, grow, so do those of the individuals composing it. The functions of the modern State are vastly more complex than those of the rulers of a Mongol horde; but the individuality of modern life is as much greater than that of the armies of Attila. The lawyer, the theo-

logian, the scholar, the politician, are products of settled rule. Because the body grows strong, it does not follow that the members grow weak; on the contrary, they wax stronger with it. It is the same with society. The progress from anarchy to order does not destroy individuality; it creates it.

Socialism is not a "new Toryism." In the days when Toryism flourished, the State, the organ of the SOCIAL WILL, was weak, so weak that an individual baron could often defy it, an individual robber carry on his depredations with impunity. In the days of Toryism, the seas swarmed with pirates, the woods with thieves; men had to protect themselves from robbery, their wives from outrage, by their own swords. If a criminal were caught, the State had no alternative but to hang him at once; it could not guarantee the fidelity of its turnkeys or insure its prison walls against a rescue party. Growing stronger, the State could afford to become more humane; but its mildness was a sign of strength, not of weakness.

Certain English thinkers, because the rule of the State has become more humane and less meddlesome than of old, have concluded that government was a declining thing, which, in the course of evolution, would disappear. Nothing could be more fallacious. The State is milder now because it has become powerful enough to afford it. Most humane people, for instance, desire to abolish capital, and indeed all bodily, punishments, as well as to reform our prisons. They argue, effectively enough, that the State has no right to take life, or to do brutal

things; and in the present state of society, no doubt, these humanitarians will some day be successful. But transfer the same arguments to the Scottish Border four centuries ago, and imagine James v. being told he ought to imprison his Border thieves for life! To do so would simply be to invite anarchy. The clans would never rest as long as one of their comrades was alive under lock and key. Fetters and bars were heavy but often rusty in those days; gaolers were cruel but corrupt; there was probably no effective audit kept of the prisoners who ought to be in each jail. Rescue by open violence even was probable, if the friends of a man were numerous enough. There was, in fact, no certainty if you did sentence a man to a long term of imprisonment that he would ever serve it. Now-a-days, whatever the sentence passed upon a prisoner, it will be carried out. The State has become strong, and, as it is strong, it can and should be merciful.

As the State becomes strong, then, it can afford to become humane. At the same time, by the preservation of peace it permits of the growth of wealth, and, with wealth, of freedom—for those who share in it. But to take advantage of the freedom rendered possible by the development of society, one must have money. The penniless man is in society, but not of it; none of the freedom it bestows on its more favoured members is for him. The Socialist movement, here as elsewhere, is an extension to its logical consequence of the Social idea itself—the freeing of *every* individual from the narrow despotism imposed by nature, through law. Labour is striving

to remove the limitations which private Capitalism has placed in the way of the masses. Trade Union regulations, Factory Acts, and so forth, are but the necessary rules required as steps in freeing the workers from the tyranny of circumstances. They are restrictive only in appearance; in reality, they are liberative. Socialism, by placing the instruments of production under the control of the people as a whole, and abolishing the tributes of rent and interest, gives to them the economic basis without which any freedom, in the sense of mere absence of law, would be meaningless. It is conceived and intended to enlarge the sphere of individual man, and derives all its driving force, not from the love of restriction, but from the hatred of it. This is sufficient in itself to guarantee us against any Socialist "tyranny." The very force that brings Socialism into being will be the first to resist any form of restraint not rendered necessary to abolish a sterner tyranny than itself.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIALISM AND THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

ONE of the most remarkable phases of the general movement towards Democracy is the wide-spread revolt of women against the inferior position, relative to that of men, to which present-day society has condemned them. The general revolt takes many shapes, appearing from time to time in a new form. Now it is a demand for access to the educational advantages hitherto reserved so much for men, now for admission to the professions, for the security of married women's property, for the right to vote. Behind all these separate demands there is a common feeling of dissatisfaction, a dissatisfaction which has already gradually modified the typical woman of the day from the submissive "Early Victorian" to the emancipated woman of the twentieth century. Those women who are in the van of progress meet with much abuse and ridicule, yet every decade sees some great advance in the general movement, some barrier broken down that separates women from equality with men.

Socialism involves so profound a change in the spiritual and material order of society, that it cannot fail to influence every current question of the day,

and this among others; yet the extent to which Socialism would affect the particular congeries of issues implied in the expression, "the woman's question," is perhaps not clearly understood. The Socialist may readily admit the good work done by Suffragists and others, who do not agree with his economic opinions, in breaking down the prejudices against sex equality; but he may justly claim that by Socialism alone can the complete emancipation of women ever take place. However the advocates of women's emancipation may look to this or that measure, to the altering of this or that unjust restriction, as a step towards justice, the "subjection of women," at least of the majority of the sex, is implied in the present order of society. Complete emancipation can only come through a fundamental change in the structure and outlook of society itself.

Those who seek the emancipation of women may, for practical purposes, be divided into two camps, "Liberals" and Socialists. I use the word "Liberal" here in no party sense, but merely because, in so far as they are Suffragists, or in favour of the removal of any existing sex restriction, even Tory supporters of women's advancement are taking part in the general movement of Liberalism. I include all who are seeking to remove some or all of the specific legal and social restrictions imposed on women by present-day society, without seeking any thoroughgoing change in the general order of society itself. My contention is that through no possible series of reforms conceived in their

spirit can the emancipation of women ever come. Justice as between the sexes must be founded on Socialism.

The reasons for this are mainly economic. Exchange and property are based on the interchange of services between individuals. If I make a thing and sell it, I am supposed to perform for my customer a certain service, which he values at a given amount of money, and pays for accordingly. No one else is in any way supposed to be concerned in the matter; and as soon as I have got my money, and given a receipt for it, the whole transaction is settled. The prices at which commodities exchange are settled by "the higgling of the market." A exchanges with B, and B with C, in an endless series, commodities which are all characterised by value in exchange. The sum of these things having value in exchange is conceived of as the total wage-worthy work of society, the total amount for which they exchange as the true income of society.

The whole aim of the Liberal movement, economically, may be said to be the moralisation of the market, to create a market in which equal efforts in the creation of exchangeable things shall command equal rewards. Various reforms have been advocated to achieve this end. Free Trade was one of these, aiming, as it did, at breaking up the special advantages of "protected" competitors. America, essentially the most individualistic and "liberal" of countries, has advocated many more, from the Single Tax of Henry George to the

abolition of the gold monopoly and "free money." All these things have a common economic philosophy behind them; they look upon exchange as between individuals; they accept, and attempt to moralise, the "cash nexus" of human society. Regarding society as a battle-field of competition, they endeavour to secure that, as far as possible, A who makes hats, and B who manufactures boots, shall neither of them be handicapped or unduly favoured in the field, but shall meet and readily exchange the product of their labour. Such regulations are not unlike those of the prize-ring; they are precautions taken against anyone fighting with loaded gloves or hitting below the belt.

And were it true that the labour of humanity is entirely, or even mainly, devoted to producing exchange values, these efforts might be well enough. If all production were economic production, we might, by taking thought, some day create a society in which such exchange could be carried on, if not with perfect justice, at least with a more tolerable balance of injustices. But the whole conception is false. A very large part of the essential work of society does not consist in the production of exchange values at all, and can in no sense be regarded as part of a series of services between living individuals, measurable by money, Almost everybody does some of this work; those who are ardent for social betterment do a great deal, in addition to that which they do for pay. The most valuable work of many men's lives only begins after the factory bell has rung, or consists of unpaid

offices of friendship, not reckoned in "the income of the nation."

But again it would not matter much if all men's time were thus divided into set periods, during which they were performing services for money, and others in which they worked for nothing. If every useful worker of either sex could have a payable trade by which to live, doing voluntary work outside of it, then a series of exchanges for cash of reciprocal services between living individuals might conceivably approach to justice. But the useful members of human society are not thus divided into producers of various sorts of exchange value. Many millions work hard all their lives doing work essential to society, which never has, and under no conceivable market ever can have, any exchange value whatever. If these are to be emancipated, if they are not to depend upon other individuals whose work is devoted to more remunerative, though not more useful forms of service, some method other than the "higgling of the market" must be found to remunerate them.

It would matter, though perhaps yet again not very much, if people placed as above belonged equally to either sex. Many men have done service, inestimable service, to humanity, on whose life-work no money value could be placed. Of these often are the poets, artists, thinkers, and inventors,—all, in point of fact, who are too far before their time. The "value in exchange" of the work of the founders of the great religions was not very great; even at the present day it is doubtful whether the copyright of the Sermon on the Mount, if issued

as a new document, would bring much. But all who in any way work, not for their own age but for posterity, though their work is obviously of enormous value, are, in the nature of things, out of the market. A pays B for services done to him, not for those done to letters coming later in the alphabet. If you work for posterity, you will, in a society founded on individualist exchange, have to wait till posterity for your reward, and may conceivably become very hungry in the meantime. Such workers come into the market before the buyers of their particular commodities have arrived; they can perform no service to the hungry crowds who come to buy.

But nature has so ordered matters that, whereas for the most part, in modern industry at least, that part of the total work of society that can be measured in money that has "exchange value," as the phrase goes, is done by men, by far the largest and most vital part of the other is done by women. Each generation of mankind are only tenants-entail of society; they are not the only people for whom the human estate exists, and are bound to hand on the fabric of society itself to others. Each generation comes into the world heavily in debt, not only for its existence, but for the painfully accumulated fabric of civilisation, to countless generations, human and pre-human, by whose forgotten efforts it has been built up. In a sense, other than theological, we are not our own, we are bought with a price, with the struggles and sorrows of the uncounted dead. As in a coral island the fleeting life at

the surface of the water rests upon the accumulated skeletons of the corals of many centuries, so man, as he is, rests upon and presupposes man as he has been. We are all members one of another, the dead as well as the living. We who now tread the earth owe a vast debt to antiquity which we can never repay to it.

Nature imposes upon men two primary duties, to secure the performance of which she has implanted in him two corresponding instincts, the instinct to preserve life, and the instinct of reproduction. It is imperative that each generation should secure its own existence; it is equally vital to society that it should in turn bring up a new generation to carry on the life of society itself. Broadly speaking, the onus of the first duty falls on men, that of the second on women. Broadly speaking, again, the performance of the first duty can, if society has not evolved far enough to provide a more excellent way, be made the basis of a series of reciprocal services between individuals, and paid for in cash. But this is because the people directly benefited by each service are actually alive. The maker of hats can exchange with the maker of shoes, because hats and shoes are wanted by the living generation, and the people who are to derive direct benefit from the work of the hatter and shoemaker are there, in the market, to pay for their requirements. Hence the prices of these things are decided by the higgling of the market; and conceivably, were there no necessary work of another kind to do, and care being taken to make the market as fair as possible, might some day be decided justly.

But by no possibility whatever can be organised a fair competitive market as between those whose work has direct reference to the needs of the living, and those whose work, equally necessary as it is, is mainly for the benefit of those unborn. If, by means of the "single tax," you could relieve industry of the toll taken by the landlord, or by "free money" of that exacted by the usurer, you might indeed get a fair market, as between the individuals who produce exchange values; but you would not do anything towards making those individuals shoulder their share of the social debt, nor secure any adequate reward for those whose work is not for the present but the future.

Any conceivable system of individualism, any determination of reward by "the higgling of a market," however fairly conducted, can never remove the monstrous injustice under which women of all ages have suffered,—that of doing socially necessary work without having a guaranteed economic return for it. It is not needful to discuss here the reason women's work in the competitive struggle is so much worse paid than men, however far muscular inferiority or other causes may,[1] in the main, account for this. The great majority of women do and always must devote a great part of their lives to the socially vital work of bearing and rearing children; and for that work, under any possible system of individualism, they cannot have a living

[1] Women's *intellectual* work is also much worse paid than that of men, though there is no reason to think it in any way inferior. Physical weakness is therefore not the sole cause of a difference which runs right through.

wage of their own, unless we allow them to sell their children into slavery.

Competitive society settles the problem by making the woman depend entirely upon the economic standing of her husband, and, to a very great extent indeed, upon his moral sense and personal affection. When these fail, through no fault of her own, she is in a parlous condition indeed. A woman may be willing and capable of performing her great social function of bearing and rearing children admirably, but if her husband is either worthless or unlucky, the means to do it will be denied her. The position is an essentially false one. The woman is regarded as performing a duty for her husband as an individual, whereas, in reality, she is working for posterity; she is helping, in the only way possible, to pay the debt of her generation to society. Her husband, on the other hand, is probably engaged in some work for the present generation. It is entirely vicious to make the reward of her work depend upon the efficiency of his.

Socialism, and Socialism alone, goes to the root of the matter. Instead of regarding human effort as a series of marketable services between individuals, Socialism essentially recognises that all Labour is social. The worth of effort is not to be determined by the value of the work A does for B, or C for D, but by the service each of these does to society. No cash nexus can determine this, for, as we have seen, a vast part of human effort has no exchange value at all. As soon as we regard

work from a social point of view, we see at once how utterly beside the mark are all discussions about the relative importance of the sexes. It is not any use discussing whether women or men contribute most to the body politic, to point to woman's physical or alleged mental inferiority. If the greatest woman were mentally and physically inferior to the weakest man, for all the forms of work generally carried on by the masculine sex, that would not weaken the claims of the child-bearing woman in the slightest degree; though it might prove that nature attached so much importance to the reproduction of the race that she was content to devote one-half of humanity to that purpose alone. Any question of the relative importance of the sexes is swept away when we remember that human society is impossible without both. They are each as essential to the stability of the world as the two pillars of an arch are to the arch itself. The absorption, in the main, of men in the processes of contemporary production gives them a favourable opportunity for monopolising an undue share of the wealth produced, and of reducing women to a position of dependence; but all advantages thus obtained are essentially dishonest. Men, just as much as women, owe the social debt, and their earnings are only their own after they have discharged their social obligations. Woman, engaged for the most part in the equally essential work of reproducing society, is equally entitled to a share.

Individualism tends to regard children as produced for their parents; Socialism regards them

as brought into the world for their own sakes and that of the future race. And if we think of it, this is essentially the right way to look at the matter. The life of the child will normally outlast that of the parents, who are naturally deeply interested in its welfare even after they are gone, but are not materially affected by it at all. On the contrary, the whole of a child's life matters, materially as well as sentimentally, to himself; while, if he in turn produce children, it may matter for uncounted ages to society. The conquest of England by William I. affected his father in no way; but it has affected the whole life of the English nation ever since. It is the individual born, and society, the living organism into which it has been born, that are chiefly affected by each birth, not the generation of his parents, now half through its time, and soon to pass away. There is an essential falsity, therefore, in regarding the bearing and rearing of children as a service a woman pays to her husband, or in making him solely responsible for her and their support. How little the contrary assumption makes against the romance of love I shall endeavour to show later; for the present, it is enough to say that the functions of bearing and rearing children are social, not individual, and should be socially, not individually rewarded.

Only so can we emancipate that vast number of women who, in all ages, must devote much of their lives to the reproduction of the race. Child-bearing is far too vital a social function to be

undertaken in any light manner. No woman who is about to become a mother, or who is rearing a young child, should have, for the time, any other *compulsory* duties whatever. The successful rearing of a child, until it is fitted to leave its mother for a time, is a sufficiently important work to justify the maintenance of one woman for a few years; and it is far better that the child should be well started off in life than that any other compulsory work should interfere with the perfection of this. This does not mean that pregnant or nursing women should be entirely idle; but any other work they undertake should be voluntary, to be taken up or left at pleasure, and in accordance with the advice of a medical attendant. A badly reared, delicate citizen is too serious a penalty of neglect for a wise society, careful of the future, to run any risk of incurring it; yet the rearing of better citizens depends very largely on the health, absence of anxiety, proper feeding, and humane surroundings of the women who bear them. These things cannot safely be left to the luck or worth of any husband, good or bad.

Now the fortune of life may make of any woman, not already past the age of child-bearing, a mother. However apparently settled in single life, some circumstance may arouse passion, and the least likely woman may marry and bear children. Most, indeed, of the younger women and girls, at any one time engaged in shops or factories, will probably, sooner or later, marry, and will transmit

to their children better or worse constitutions, convey to them in their early years better or worse ideas, according as the conditions in which they are now employed are good or bad. Under any possible system of individualism, regarding, as it must, all work as an exchange of services between individual and individual, such unmarried women will be paid and treated according to the market value of their labour, very probably much less than enough to maintain them in full mental and bodily vigour. They will frequently be worked far too long to enable them to study the duties of life and maternity, and may readily, even if ultimately well married, become physically and mentally unfit to bear and rear healthy children. Even if they come out of shop or factory well suited themselves for the duties of their new life, it will, as before said, entirely depend on the luck or worth, not of themselves but of their husbands, whether they have the opportunity to fulfil their duties aright.

The work of every man and woman is to be valued, in the last resort, only by its social utility. In attending to the health of his patients, the doctor serves the community; the merchant helps to supply the community with food and clothes, the railway delivers them to the individual units of the human fellowship for whose efficiency they are required. Whether these people are paid by the particular people immediately concerned, or directly by the public itself, is a matter of detail and arrangement; but all service is social service, and whether

its price can be settled by the "higgling of the market or not," should be honestly and adequately paid.

Now there is no final enfranchisement of sex, class, or individual, no real freedom until the means of life are secure. So long as anyone depends on another for his or her physical necessities, we have a condition of potential or actual servitude. As long as a wife entirely depends for her livelihood and that of her children on the earnings of her husband, she cannot do her duty and live a life of rational freedom unless that husband is both faithful and successful. However good he is, her position is not as dignified as it ought to be. She does quite as valuable work as he, and, for that work, she should have her own income. But the social value of a woman's work bears no relation whatever to that by which the husband earns his income. She may be childless, and he rich and industrious; she may be the industrious mother of many children, and he poor and ill paid. Yet in both cases, *her* reward is measured by *his* work, a totally unreasonable way of providing for her.

Socialism would solve the difficulty by providing every married woman, as such, with an income of her own; and, unless she were obviously unfitted to the task, the administration of a further income adequate to the proper rearing of her children, and that independent of any possible misconduct or incompetence on the part of her husband. The care of the children of drunken and dissolute

mothers, together with the means needful for rearing their offspring, would generally be under the control of their husbands, unless they too were unsuitable persons for the task ; but, normally, until they were old enough to have a choice of their own, the Socialist state would regard the mother as the proper custodian of young children. In her hands it would place adequate means for the fulfilment of her social obligations, and would thus finally make married women really free.

The very idea of such a thing produces a sort of terror in many minds. That married women should be economically independent of their husbands seems to many the ready way to "free" love and various other abominations. It would be well if such people would study the facts of contemporary life. After all, we are only proposing to make universal that which is now common enough. Thousands of married women to-day have private incomes of their own as great as those of their husbands, and a girl with a private income is certainly rather popular among bachelors. Nor is a woman of means any more likely to quarrel with a decent husband, however much better fitted she may be to take her part with a bad one. But the income of a married woman to-day bears no relation to the number of her children, to the value of her services to society ; nor is it generally wages of work at all, but interest on capital. She may be as free as the wife in the Socialist state to escape the oppression of a worthless husband, but she does not stand in the same honourable

relation to society—she does her work for nothing, and would receive her money equally regularly if she were idle. Nevertheless, as between man and wife, the position under Socialism would be very much what it is to-day in those households in which each have equal incomes. The arrangement need interfere neither less nor more with the happiness and permanence of marriage in the one case than the other.

For, again, "kissing goes by favour." It is not a series of duties, but what a woman freely yields to a man, or a man to a woman, that is really worth having. Socialism enables men and women to meet on a footing of perfect freedom and perfect equality. They have no material obligations to one another, the non- or imperfect fulfilment of which, culpable or otherwise, can breed jealousy or debate. There is left to them their spiritual fellowship and all that that implies. They can give to their children as much care or thought as they choose, can plot and plan for them, conscious, at any rate, that in any event those children are certain of adequate maintenance. After the State has attended to the things that concern society, husband and wife will have enough left to do to attend to those that make the home. And both will be freed from any sense of compulsion, any idea that the wife serves from economic fear, or the husband from a sense of his duty to dependants. The basis of love, as of fellowship, is equality.

CHAPTER VII

SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

THE Labour victories and the overthrow of the Unionist party at the General Election of 1906 called forth much curious literature. At first many members of the defeated party seemed disposed to take comfort from the appearance of the new factor in politics. They were not, so they thought, so much defeated on the merits, or on account of the revival of Liberalism, as because, for the moment, the new Socialist opposition had worked with the old Liberal one in a common hostility to the Government that had been so long in power. Another election, and things might be different; and if only the Labour Party were duly coaxed and petted, perhaps Labour would vote Tory next time, wherever at least there was no candidate of its own in the field.

Among practical politicians, Lord Claud Hay was perhaps the leading exponent of this idea. He at least made very effective use of it, and won his election on a curious mixture of Toryism and Socialism, which, it is perfectly safe to say, no Unionist Government will ever give him a chance to carry out. It would be interesting to know what the only Tory who increased his majority in

a London working-class constituency in 1906 thinks of the present anti-Socialist crusade. But others were not so well informed; and an article that amused me much at the time by that graceful essayist Mr. G. S. Street, will serve as the basis of some remarks here needed on the relations between Socialism and Communism.

As will be seen in the course of this chapter, while Socialism does not necessarily imply absolute Communism, and while the two ideas can, as in Mr. Street's essay, readily be divided in thought, there is no such sharp division in practice. It is, however, clearly possible to conceive of, though not to put in practice, a form of Socialism in which there would be no Communism at all. We might make common property of land and industrial capital, without either equality of wages, or allowing any citizen to eonsume or use anything without performing any service in return. We might under a system of Socialism pay very high salaries to our managers of industry on account of their exceptional ability; or we might reverse the present scheme of things, and reward most highly our scavengers and sweeps because of the unpleasantness of their work. Some such universal system of unequal rewards for various services is what Mr. Street obviously means by Socialism, and, of course, in thought, if not in practice, it is easy enough to conceive of a society in which all distribution was effected this way, and all Communism excluded. It is a combination of competition and social ownership, which for a time will no doubt form the

normal, though not universal, method of distribution.

Communism itself is a word that requires more clear definition. The formula of Socialism, as above described, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his deeds," has been met by a corresponding formula of Communism, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." Clearly one man may need more than another, and this proposal is very different from the equal but definite incomes of *Looking Backward*. It is the only form of Communism ever likely to be tried, as indeed it is very largely to-day. We open our parks and picture galleries free to the public. If a man has no interest in art, his use of the National Gallery is by no means so extensive as that of the student. The enjoyment of these things is communised by being made free to all; the inequality of tastes and capacities secures that this is to different people a very different privilege. Which sort of Communism Mr. Street intended, I cannot say; but this sort, the rendering of public services free of charge to all, however much it may contradict Mr. Street's ideal Socialism, is certainly quite in accord with the policy of the Socialist movement.

The fallacies of Mr. Street's pleasant essay arose chiefly from his purely literary way of looking at the question. With him Toryism and Liberalism, Communism and Socialism, are all logical conceptions of society mutually exclusive and opposed to one another, except, save the mark! Toryism and

Socialism! An alliance between Toryism and Socialism is, so thought Mr. Street, perfectly possible, for the fundamental principles underlying each are the same! Mr. Street harmonises in his mind the Toryism he admires and the Socialism with which he sympathises, and forms, in the clouds, the Tory-Socialism of the future.

No such amiable reconciliation could survive a moment's practical experience of politics. Neither Toryism nor Socialism are things existing merely in an ideal world of the essayist; they are actual organisations, engaged in active hostility in the real world. The people who work the gramophones for the anti-Socialist campaign have a clearer conception of politics than Mr. Street. Anyone can construct a harmony between ideal principles, if only he is allowed to state those principles, adding or leaving out as suits his purpose. But the word Toryism has no meaning except in relation to the Tory party. It is not some ideal Toryism, but the Tory party in the concrete, an organisation of landlords, great capitalists, brewers, company promoters and speculators, with which we have to deal. These men are bent, not on translating an idyl by Mr. Street into fact, but on protecting their vested interests in the thing established. To think that there can ever be anything else except a war of extermination between the two parties is to be blind to the nature of things. Prove that Toryism and Socialism are one, and you destroy the Tory party. Landlord and capitalist would leave such a party at once

enlisting again under any formula that would enable them to make head against the enemy. We may be perfectly certain that the ring of capitalists and landlords round Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain are not going to be bluffed into surrendering their wealth on account of any harmony Mr. Street may see between the general principles of Toryism and Socialism.

But it is the assumed antagonism between Socialism and Communism that here concerns us. If the Tory party is not a collection of *doctrinaire* idealists, neither is the Socialist Labour Party. This is concerned to recapture for the people the means of production now monopolised by the few, not on any special plan, constructed by the literary essayist, for managing them after. The contradiction between Socialism and Communism, imagined by Mr. Street, has no existence in the actual world of things. We are Socialists now, we are Communists now on the small scale, as we are Individualists on the great. The coming Socialism will reverse the proportions in which these ingredients are blended in society; but it will probably be ages before it will abolish any one of the three of them. If it ever does this, it is safe to say it will be the Socialism, as defined by Mr. Street, not the Communism he abhors, that will disappear.

The reason of this lies in the nature of things. You may mingle in any given society the principles of State Socialism and Individualism in an almost infinite variety of proportions, while the

amount of Communism may vary immensely; but Communism is the only principle which must always be present, more or less. This is not because Communism is right or wrong in the abstract, but simply because it is, over a very large part of life, by far the cheapest and most convenient arrangement.

Perhaps as familiar an illustration of this as any is the municipal tramcar, moving over the public street. Here we have two things, each the property of the community, but placed by it at the service of the public on different terms. The pedestrian goes free, but the patron of the tramcar has to pay his fare, the total sum of fares generally yielding a profit, great or small, to the authority owning the tramways. The difference, it is clear, does not come about through any *doctrinaire* devotion to profit-making Collectivism or to Communism in principle; it is merely due to the fact that it would be highly inconvenient to collect from every foot-passenger his contribution to the maintenance of the road. One citizen uses the street often, another but seldom; yet the municipal authority collects its yearly rate from each alike, giving no thought whatever to considerations of equality.

In the last generation our turnpike roads were freed from tolls, and the highways of the land are now completely communised. A similar process is going on with bridges, most of which are now free, though some are, here and there, maintained by tolls. The general tendency, however, is towards

complete communisation; and indeed the pressure of public feeling always makes strongly in favour of this way of dealing with public bridges. The public dislikes tolls more than rates, and there is generally a very fierce agitation against paying to go over them.

It is evident that, when applicable, the system has many advantages. As soon as anything becomes free for the use of the public, a great saving of labour is effected. Were we, for instance, in a position to free our railways, the whole army of booking-clerks, ticket-collectors, etc., could be dispensed with, and the taxpayer would only be called upon to make good the remaining expenses of the traffic. To revive the turnpike system, on the other hand, would involve the farming out of our toll-gates to a swarm of officials, who would have to live out of the tolls. The public would be compelled to pay, both for them and the upkeep of the roads. This practical advantage outweighs all theoretic considerations, so soon as the use of anything is not likely to result in impositions on the public.

The first determining factor in the question is cheapness. Society leaves common, or deliberately makes common, anything that has no exchange value. Thus air and sunlight are rarely made private property.[1] They are in a state of free Communism, every one using according to his

[1] There are exceptions. You will pay a higher rate for a house which gets its share of the sun, than for one half-hidden by another; while the advantages of a "healthy situation" are generally included in the rent.

needs, because no one has ever been able to make them scarce enough to be worth selling. On the other hand, the roads, as we have seen, have been made free, because the use of them is little liable to abuse, and the impartial collection of tolls from everyone who made any use of them would be vastly troublesome, not to say impossible.

The communisation of elementary education gives a curious illustration of the spirit of social evolution in this matter. Public elementary education started with a compromise, very common in England. The ratepayer was called upon to build, and largely maintain, the public schools; but the parents were also, in the first instance, expected to contribute. The importance of the school pence was much insisted upon by Conservatives, as a means of maintaining the independence of the parents. Indeed, a sort of principle was made of the matter; and many friends of Church schools, who voted for the Unionists in 1886, no doubt thought they were securing themselves against free education. But Unionist opposition, as the sequel showed, proceeded solely from the mistaken idea that the new departure would be very expensive. As soon as it was demonstrated that the schools could be freed for a comparatively trifling sum, the Unionist forgot all about "the maintenance of parental responsibility," and abolished the school pence for ever. The same process will, no doubt, some day be repeated with all forms

of higher education. Facilities for education are not liable to abuse, and it is a matter of public interest that anyone who is willing to learn should have every opportunity to do so.

As long, however, as the communisation of anything would be likely to lead to the wasteful consumption of it, the common sense of Socialists and Individualists alike puts a price upon it. Nobody, as far as I know, advocates free whisky. The community does many things for the public gratis, and tends to do many more below or as little above cost price as possible; but it generally endeavours to get something out of the consumers wherever the thing supplied is in genuine demand at a money price. Many public services are carried on, as elementary education used to be, by a compromise. People generally pay something for the use of public baths and wash-houses, though the ratepayers, as such, usually contribute the greater portion. Municipal water supplies cover cost, and leave a profit; but the policy of communal water authorities usually leads them to encourage the consumption of water by selling at a very low price. Municipal gas works, on the other hand, usually sell very little more cheaply than private ones, giving less to the consumer and more to the ratepayer. The principle governing both methods is the convenience of the community as a whole. It is in the interests of public health that people and their houses should be clean; it is of com-

paratively little public importance how private houses are lighted. If, therefore, a woman wants an extra tap or two to assist in keeping her house clean, or the use of a public wash-house, a helpful public authority will make it easy for her to have either; if she wants to sit up late, it will make her pay for her gas.

Thus, while the Socialist movement insists on the extension of public ownership as a matter of principle, it treats the manner in which that ownership shall be exercised in any particular case in a manner frankly opportunist. People like Mr. Street mistake the genesis of Socialism, the compelling force of social evolution. The constitution of the world is such that beings sufficiently intelligent to form societies can satisfy their needs more economically by the method of co-operation than of competition. Nature, in the long run, always tends to eliminate waste, to substitute the cheaper for the more wasteful method of production. She, therefore, may be depended upon to dispense with the overlapping and parasitism involved in our industrial system, so soon as we can substitute one not requiring an army of commercial travellers and touts, or another of idle landlords and shareholders. The "urge of the world" towards co-operation is at the bottom of the Socialist movement, a thing perfectly independent of any idealistic philosophy. Nor, as between one form of co-operation and another, will the forces of social evolution pay any regard to the political

theorist. The elimination of friction and waste is their sole criterion; and, we may depend upon it, railways and trams will be communised like roads and bridges, so soon as the resultant clerical and other economies will more than pay for possible unnecessary use of the lines.

In order that an article may have exchange value, a certain element of scarcity must exist. Thus salt water is free at the seaside, because it is costless and common; in places where it is scarce, and to which it has to be brought, it is dearer or cheaper according to the cost of transport. Things superabundant and natural have no price, and though often invaluable in use, have been common from the beginning. Other things can be and are communised, in proportion to their cheapness, their necessity, and the smallness of the liability to abuse. But the cheapness of things and their liability to abuse are variable with time and place. In some countries, and even in this one, some day or other, it might be quite safe to communise whisky; while in some it might be fatal to free many things which the Englishman would never abuse. Such things as air and sunlight, as already said, are naturally free, because they are costless and abundant. Other things being equal, the cheaper a thing is the more easy it is to communise. Again, take the water supply. At one time, before the construction of great reservoirs, water was taken round in carts and sold like milk. Collected on a great scale, and distributed by

gravitation, this cumbrous method has disappeared, and the modern municipality will supply the housekeeper with as much as she requires for a few shillings a quarter. If a public authority owns the water supply, there is a form of Communism from the start. The water rate is not calculated on what the consumer uses, but on the rental of the house, and the taker of a morning tub gets off at the same price as he who treats water with rigid economy. The public authority, as a rule, recognises that it is a matter of policy to induce as many people to consume water freely, and generally keeps the water rate as low as possible.

Given the adequate public necessity for a thing, the process of communising it depends partly on the cost and partly on the liability to abuse. Now, municipal authorities very generally adopt a water policy which tends to make it almost matterless to them how much water the householder uses, if only he will use enough. London, and other places dependent upon the provision made by private companies, have suffered from frequent water famines. Leicester is perhaps the only place having a communal supply where I remember a similar difficulty arising. This proceeds from the different policies usually pursued by private and public water authorities. The private water company is, as a rule, content to be only a few years ahead of the demands of an industrial district; it does not care to undertake the expense of laying out reservoirs much in excess of the

immediate demand. It tends to make the surplus of supply over demand as small as possible, and continually runs the risk of allowing the growth of its district to overtake the supply. As population grows, it reluctantly admits outsiders to a share in its monopoly so as to acquire funds for needed extensions. Debenture shares are issued, bearing a lower rate of interest, and new works are constructed; the cost of the old and new being together very likely much more than would have been required to provide an adequate supply for all contingencies in the first instance. But such extensions are very frequently undertaken only after the people have suffered severely from a short supply of water. It took one company thirty years to realise that, if it wanted to avoid water famines and continual friction, it must arrange for a supply greatly in excess of the momentary demand. With a corporation supply it is usually very different. Glasgow and Manchester, faced by the responsibility of supplying their people with water, go at once to Loch Katrine or Thirlmere, and settle the problem once for all by tapping a supply adequate for all the conceivable needs of the future. The largest lake in Wales is said to be the artificial one made by the Liverpool corporation; and, however much Liverpool may grow in the future, there is no likelihood of its people ever being short of water. The method is the cheapest in the long run. Far more money will be spent by a body continually adding new collecting grounds and reservoirs, than by one which

does the whole work at once. We seem to be approaching a time when each great industrial district will have tapped an adequate watershed, and have made itself independent of the driest summer.

When an ample supply of water has once been assured, the social benefits of free access to it begin to look great beside the savings effected by refusing to supply a minority who will not or cannot pay for it. As the interest on money borrowed for the water supply grows less or the consumption greater, there is a marked tendency to lower the water rate, in order to encourage consumption. The pipes are laid down; the reservoirs are built; the cost of pumping is not great, and it seems a pity to run the risk of expensive epidemics by letting anyone go without a full supply. At present municipal water is only in its infancy, and the original debts contracted by our towns for their supplies are not yet liquidated. Every year there is a large sum to be paid as interest and redemption of capital. But, some day, these debts will all be repaid, in many cases before very long. Is it not likely that many cities will forego the ordinary water rate, and, insisting on landlords laying the water into every house, make the use of water, like education, compulsory and free?

People can, of course, leave a yard-tap running, but generally there is little fear of an abuse in the use of water. Men cannot live on water alone, and a communal water supply will not

enable the waster to live without work. With food, shelter, and clothing, however, it is otherwise; and to proceed from the Collectivism that sells these things for work or the tokens of work to the Communism that gives them freely is a delicate proceeding. Nevertheless, even in these things, I see reason to think progress towards Communism may be made ere long. The concentration of capital and the improvement of machinery, resulting first in monopoly and then in State ownership, involves many economies, and we may expect in the future a steady reduction in the prices of the necessaries of life. We may look also, when the debts contracted to establish municipal trading enterprises are paid off, and when the land around them, as often in Germany, is owned by the cities of England, for a very large public revenue in each town independent of the rates. Our cities are already looking towards a municipal milk supply as the only means to secure the purity of this essential of life to children, and as the cheapest way to avoid the overlapping of numberless milkmen all visiting the same street. They are also charged with the relief of the poor, and somehow or other are supposed to see that nobody actually starves. They will have to perform this duty much more efficiently in the future, and they are likely to have far more ample means to do it.

It seems to me not unlikely that it will be found easiest to do this by some simple method of communising the first essentials of life, and leaving everything else, for a time at least, to be

purchased only by work or the tokens of work. Let us see what we do at present. The poor widow seeking outdoor relief, after much petitioning and not a few insults, is supplied with a hopelessly inadequate amount of money to rear her children. This comes out of the purses of grudging rate-payers, who collectively own nothing or next to nothing, and have no public income, except what is extracted from them by frequent visits of the collector. A certain amount of money is doled out—the thing of all things which can be abused in the greatest variety of ways—and we have no guarantee that it will be wisely used for the benefit of the children.

Now let us suppose altered conditions. Let us assume that the town, instead of being poor as our towns are at present, owns its land and houses, derives a revenue from its electricity and other monopolies, and caters for the people, at a profit, in whole hosts of ways now unattempted. In particular, it is supplying all its citizens with bread and milk, either at a profit, or cost price. Would not the project of supplying all the citizens with these free, out of the ample public revenues, look very different from what it does now? It must be remembered that bread and milk are things the freeing of which is not likely to be abused. People seldom care to take more of either than is really nourishing; and if everyone had enough of these, the foodstuffs consumed would actually produce an equivalent in increased human vitality. Nor, if they were free, could anyone sell either, and

buy worse things instead. Those who receive these things from a charity, may sell their bread and buy beer; but free bread would destroy the market for it altogether, and the recipient of a municipal loaf must either eat it or leave it. But, in so far as food is concerned, free bread effectually solves the problem of poverty altogether. If sufficient for the day were taken round to each house every morning, there could be no starvation.

Nor does it follow that free bread and milk would lead to idleness; it might very readily mean merely more universally diffused ability for industry. Very few, either men or women, would be content with bread and milk alone; nearly all would desire some sort of gratification in addition. They would have very small chance of getting it in a community whose purse-strings were shut to any appeal for "a penny to buy bread." Free bread and milk would secure to most the physical strength to earn some money for other things, and would make it doubly difficult to obtain this by any other means than work.

Among the industries that tend to monopoly and centralisation we note two tendencies at work: the one to place production in the hands of the community, to communise the land and capital; the other, so soon as machinery and centralisation have rendered the economic product of the industry cheap enough, to communise it also. What has happened with education and roads will happen ere long with many other things. With how many, or how soon with any one of them, it is impossible

to say. The process will proceed, rapidly or slowly, as the production of necessaries becomes, rapidly or slowly, cheaper; as the general level of intelligence rises, as the surplus wealth at the disposal of the community increases, as the humanising of routine processes makes the work of men and women employed in them less and less distasteful. Probably no ultimate limits can be set to the process; for no limits can be set to the advance of man's power over nature, or his possible improvement in the social virtues. Possibly everything produced by the community may be communised some day, simply because this becomes, in practice, the cheapest and easiest way of supplying to everyone his needs.

There remains to be considered that vast series of industries, which can never tend thus to centralisation; those in which the machine can never displace the hand except by vulgarising the product. I have already shown cause to think that the very progress of State Socialism will stimulate the demand for these, by raising the general standard of comfort and education among the people. I do not think that the State will ever take them over, or say to the artistic craftsman that he shall not carry on his vocation for private sale if he chooses; though the gradual monopolisation of the larger processes will render it impossible for him to invest his gains at interest, or to leave a family independent of work. Such a man would be profoundly affected, alike by the impossibility of securing an independence, and by the communisation of commodity after commodity for which, at one time, he was

compelled to work. Yet the artist-craftsman is the last man to become idle. This industry is motived by the enthusiasm of the amateur, even more than by the desire for profit. Certainly the growth of Communism would deprive such men of the "spur of necessity and the hope of wealth"; but I am very much mistaken if the growing demand for art products and the general spread of education would not enormously increase their numbers. Now, anyone who devotes himself to a craft, even as a hobby, soon produces a great many more things than he can use. The youth who starts fretwork or wood-carving soon lumbers the house with brackets, boxes, and other things, made, not because there is any need for them, but for their love of making. The generosity of the amateur photographer is well known to all his friends; the amateur gardener overloads his visitors with presents of flowers and vegetables. There is, in fact, a strong force in human nature urging people to produce and give away the pleasant things of life, a force largely held in check by the present necessity to retain everything having a money value for sale. People like to give away the things they like to make or raise; and, under more favourable conditions, would certainly gratify this amiable vanity much more freely than at present.

In the "city that is at unity with itself," towards which social evolution, working throughout the ages is slowly tending, the city where every thought and deed is inspired by the spirit of brotherhood and equality, there would be no legal property, but

a State Communism, embracing all that could be best produced by centralised action, and a voluntary Communism resulting from the instinctive fertility of the individual mind.

Human life is a becoming and not a being, and such complete socialisation of the spirit and practice of mankind may never come about. This question future generations must settle for themselves. For this, it is enough to secure for the nation the control over the greater processes of modern industry invented during the last century and a half; to follow the Industrial- by its complement the Social-Revolution.

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